

# A guide of the questionnaires used in the measurement of health-related quality of life in head and neck oncology

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## ABSTRACT

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**Aims and background.** There is a plethora of instruments which measure health-related quality of life (HRQOL), although only a fraction of these have been used in surgical studies and palliative care. Clinicians involved in the management of head and neck pathology face the difficult task of selecting the instrument most suited to the aspect of the patients' perspective that they want to measure. The aim of this article is to guide head and neck trainees in deciding on the use of the appropriate instrument for evaluation of the patient's perspective.

**Methods and study design.** The two authors independently searched and scrutinized the literature. The ISI search engine with cross-reference using PubMed and Ovid was searched with the terms "quality of life", "questionnaire" and specific specialty terms. Studies written in the English language were selected and the abstracts searched for evidence of patient self-completed questionnaires and HRQOL outcome.

**Results.** There are five broad category headings into which quality of life studies in head and neck oncology can be divided. These include: patient performance questionnaires, generic quality of life questionnaires, generic cancer questionnaires, head and neck cancer questionnaires, and head and neck functional questionnaires.

**Conclusions.** Patient perspective can be assessed using a number of instruments, including open interview, semi-structured interview, and the simple questionnaire. The choice of instrument depends somewhat on personal preference, the outcomes being measured, and available resources.

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**Key words:** head and neck cancer, health-related quality of life, questionnaires, surgery, UW-QOL, validation.

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