Measuring quality of life improvements in COPD patients: St George’s Respiratory Questionnaire (SGRQ)

About COPD

COPD is a chronic, progressive, treatable but incurable lung disease affecting 210 million people worldwide. For people with COPD, decreasing lung function causes breathlessness and stops them from being active. This can lead to a downward spiral of worsening symptoms and even further inactivity, which has a significant impact on their overall quality of life. A major goal of treatment and of research into new therapies is to improve health-related quality of life in COPD patients. One of the most frequently used tools for assessing quality of life is the St. George’s Respiratory Questionnaire.

About St George’s Respiratory Questionnaire

A 50-item questionnaire designed to measure impact on health status (quality of life) in patients with obstructive airways disease, including COPD. The SGRQ score is calculated by:

- **Symptoms** - this component is concerned with the effect of respiratory symptoms, their frequency and severity.
- **Activity** - concerned with activities that cause or are limited by breathlessness.
- **Impacts (psychosocial)** - covers a range of aspects concerned with social functioning and psychological disturbances resulting from respiratory disease.

Total score summarises the impact of the disease on overall health status; the score is expressed as a percentage of overall impairment where 100 represents worst possible health status and 0 indicates best possible health status.

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What effect might a decrease in SGRQ score have on the daily life of a patient with COPD?

For an individual patient, a reduction of 4 points in SGRQ score could be illustrated by the following clinical scenarios:

I no longer take a long time to wash or dress. I can walk up stairs without stopping and I am able to leave the house for shopping or entertainment.

Things no longer seem to require too much effort. I no longer have to stop for rests while doing housework and I can now carry things upstairs.

I no longer have to walk more slowly than other people. And I am no longer breathless when getting washed or bending over.

References
