FUNCTIONAL STATUS ASSESSMENT

The Barthel Index

OVERVIEW:
The Barthel Index was first published in 1965,1 and was designed to assess change in functional status in rehabilitation patients with neurologic or musculoskeletal impairments.

AUTHORS/PRIMARY REFERENCE:

STRUCTURE OF THE TOOL:
The Barthel Index assesses 10 ADLs. Eight items are related to self-care activities: feeding, transfer from chair to bed and back, grooming, toileting, bathing, dressing, bowel and bladder continence. Two items pertain to mobility: walking or propelling a wheelchair, and ascending/descending stairs. It is scored on a 3-point weighted scale ranging from total dependence to total independence in an activity, with the weighted scores summed to give a total score from 0 (total dependence) to 100 (total independence).

BASE OF EVIDENCE/PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES:
- The Barthel Index was the first measure developed to assess functional status during rehabilitation and has served as a benchmark for other measures – thus establishing its criterion validity2
- Test-retest reliability, r=0.872
- Intra-rater reliability, r=0.71-0.992
- Inter-rater reliability, r=0.75-0.992

TARGET POPULATION AND SETTING:
- The Barthel Index was developed for patients with neurologic or musculoskeletal impairments undergoing rehabilitation, although it has been utilized as a tool evaluating functional trajectories of hospitalized elderly patients3

INTENDED USER(S):
- The Barthel Index was developed for use by clinicians and/or caregivers who are involved in the patient’s rehabilitation or are familiar with the patient’s abilities through direct observation

NOTES ON USING THE BARTHEL INDEX:
- The Barthel Index is designed for use by direct observation of patients’ abilities by a professional caregiver – it relies somewhat on the clinical judgment of the rater
- Administration time ranges from a few minutes (based on the caregiver’s knowledge of the patient) to an hour (if completed as a new functional test)2
- The Barthel Index has been shown to be reliable when conducted by trained lay personnel or health professionals as a telephone interview with patients who have minor disabilities4

WHERE TO GET THE BARTHEL INDEX:
- The Barthel Index and supporting information is displayed with permission of the author at the www.StrokEngine.ca website hosted at McGill University at the following link:
  Tool – *The Barthel Index*
- The Barthel Index is a copyrighted tool, but it may be used freely for non-profit purposes by citing the Marland State Medical Society with the following acknowledgement:

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING:

Updated October 30 2012