

A Service Evaluation of the Fatigue, Anxiety and Breathlessness (FAB) Programme

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Background

- The FAB programme is multidisciplinary led and has been running as part of Marie Curie Edinburgh Hospice's day therapies since February 2017. The programme considers the management of the symptoms of fatigue, anxiety and breathlessness for patients living with progressive, life limiting conditions. Research suggests that people living with the debilitating symptoms experienced with advanced illnesses continue to strive for active participation in everyday activities.^[1]

FAB has been designed to:

- enable patients to understand the symptoms of their illness.
- find coping strategies and learn techniques that can help to relieve and manage their symptoms.
- aim to achieve the best possible quality of life.

FAB

- Five two hourly sessions, once a week, led by a physiotherapist, OT and CNS.
- Each session encompasses a group aspect and a 1:1 session which enables each patient to discuss their individual goals and needs.
- Outcome measures demonstrate change over time.

Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of the FAB programme over a two year period.

Method

Design: Service evaluation consisting of a case note review of the notes of all patients referred to FAB from June 2017 to June 2019; followed by an analysis of feedback forms.

Results

Characteristics of patients referred

- In total, 69 patients were referred to FAB over a 2 year period (44% male; 56% female).
- Mean age was 74 years (male) and 69 years (female). Age ranged from 33 to 93 years.
- 38 (55%) had a non-cancer diagnosis. 31 (45%) had cancer.

Attendance

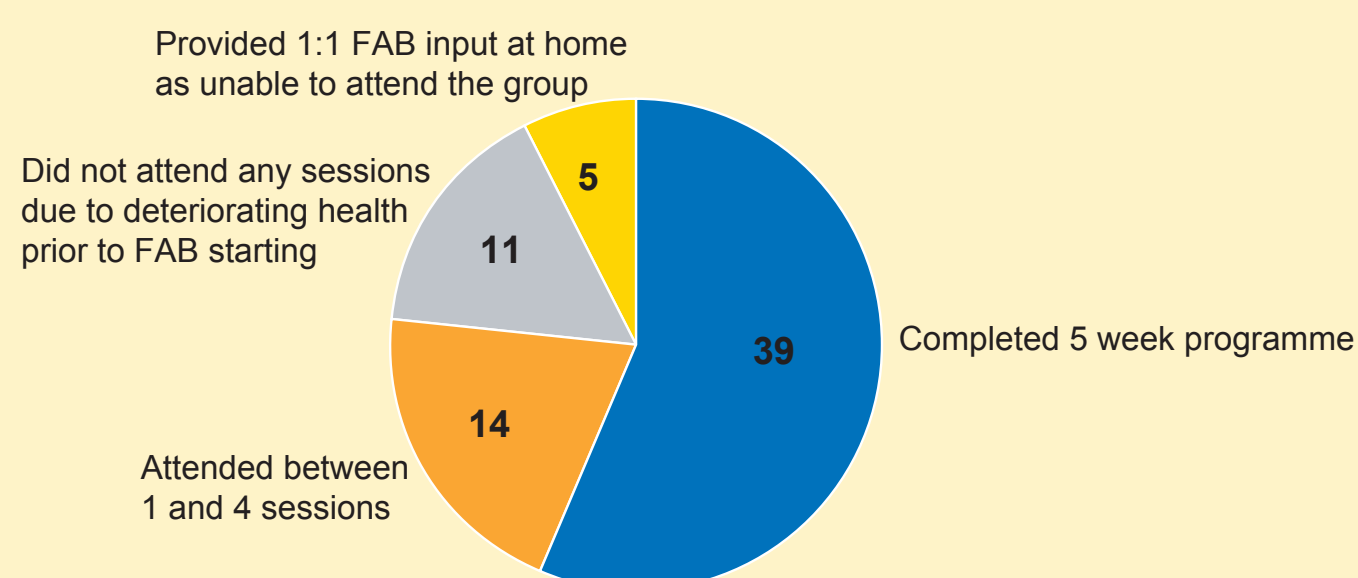


Figure 1: Patient Attendance.

- Patients referred externally (47 patients) were more likely to complete the course (n=27; 57% completion), compared to internal referrals (28 patients) (n=12; 43% completion) (Figure 1).
- For patients that completed the 5 week programme 35 out of 39 (90%) showed improvements in their overall palliative outcome measure scores. Average symptom outcome measures also improved across each key domain (Figure 2).

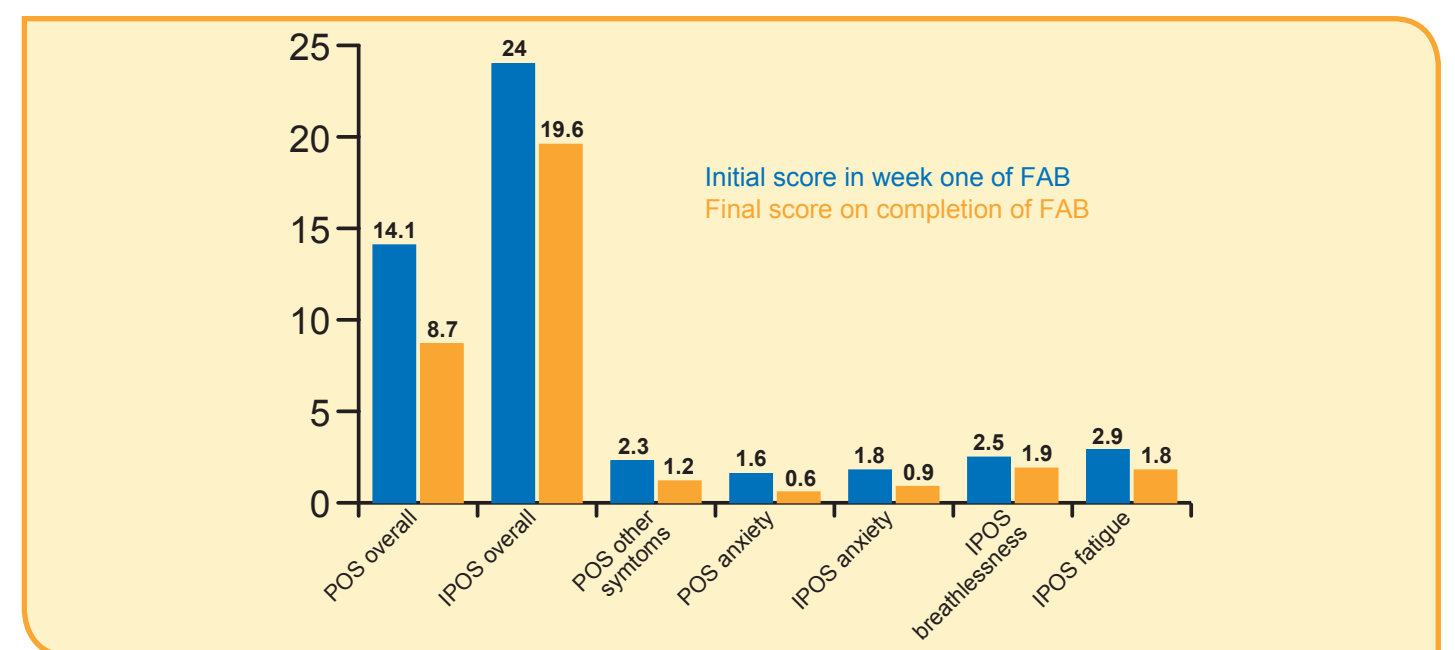


Figure 2: Average Outcome Measure Scores.

Qualitative Results

- Thirty three patients who completed the programme returned evaluation forms (n=39, 85% completion).
- Every patient indicated that they would recommend the programme to others.
- Patients valued the group format, sharing ideas, learning from and connecting with others in a similar situation to themselves. Some reported it improved their quality of life.

"I have applied a lot of what I have learned which has improved day to day life"
"Helped me to manage my breathlessness and is making life much easier"
"I now have a more positive attitude"
"I learned that there is a future and now understand what palliative care actually is"
"The FAB course was a life enhancer"
"I have now been able to achieve things that I never thought I would get back".



Figure 3: Group discussion during FAB.

Conclusions

- The majority of patients completing FAB showed improvements in their overall symptoms, as well as specific symptoms – breathlessness, anxiety and fatigue.
- Externally referred patients were more likely to complete the course. 57% of internally referred patients were unable to complete the programme due to deteriorating health.
- High proportion of non-cancer patients were referred and 74% completed the 5 week programme suggesting that FAB is acceptable to both cancer and non-cancer patients.
- The evaluation provides preliminary evidence for the effectiveness and acceptability of FAB in a hospice day therapy setting. Extension of the current service is warranted, alongside ongoing evaluation.