

# Research Report

## The Measurements in the Addictions for Triage and Evaluation MATE in Northeast Slovenia.

Maja Bundalo Bočič

Health Center Maribor, Slovenia, May 2016.

### Summary.

The aim of this report was to assess the feasibility of the instrument "Measurements in Addiction for Triage and Evaluation (MATE)" in the clinical psychiatric population of Northeast Slovenia, with and without alcohol use disorders (AUD).

The MATE interviews of patients were conducted and the feasibility of the instrument was assessed with the feasibility questionnaire and focus group of the interviewers. The results indicated that the MATE is an acceptable and useful instrument for routine practice in Northeast Slovenia. The report concludes that the MATE could be suitable for AUD treatment evaluation in Northeast Slovenia. Thus, the evaluation of patients' characteristics with AUD in Northeast Slovenia using the MATE is recommended.

### Introduction

Slovenia ranked fourth for prevalence of alcohol use disorders (AUDs) and alcohol dependence (AD) in 2010, in a group of 53 European countries<sup>1</sup>. Recorded alcohol consumption during the last 15 years was showing only marginal propensity to change and, in 2014 was 10,95 litres per capita<sup>2</sup>. The health disparities in Slovenia as

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<sup>1</sup> Global status report on alcohol and health 2014. WHO. Available at [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/112736/1/9789240692763\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/112736/1/9789240692763_eng.pdf) (accessed 18 July 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Registrirana poraba čistega alkohola pri odraslih prebivalcih (15+ let), letno po spremenljivkah [Recorded alcohol per capita consumption (in litres of pure alcohol; 15+ years), annually]. Ljubljana: Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje [National Institute of Public Health]; 2015. Available at [https://podatki.nijz.si/pxweb/sl/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal\\_\\_4%20Determinante%20zdravja\\_\\_4c%20Uživanje%20alkohola/ALKO.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=3ad87130-9e27-4e9f-8883-0a7f81daf935](https://podatki.nijz.si/pxweb/sl/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal/NIJZ%20podatkovni%20portal__4%20Determinante%20zdravja__4c%20Uživanje%20alkohola/ALKO.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=3ad87130-9e27-4e9f-8883-0a7f81daf935) (accessed 8 October 2015).

consequences of alcohol use<sup>3</sup> are similar to developmental disparities, in an East-manner<sup>4, 5</sup>. Males from a rural environment in the less developed East Slovenia region represent the most affected part of the Slovenian population with AUD<sup>6</sup>. Northeast Slovenia covers 6 of 8 regions of East Slovenia (exceptions are Southeast and Notranjska-Karst Region) and has almost half of whole Slovenian population (888.356 of 2 mil inhabitants).

Despite relatively accessible and established treatment programs, basic indicators about outcomes of treatment for AUD in Slovenia remain unknown<sup>7</sup> due to a fairly non-existing systematic assessment<sup>8</sup>.

In order to assess patient predictors of alcohol treatment outcome we needed an instrument as the MATE, developed primary for evaluation in addiction. A purpose of this report is to show the feasibility (usefulness, time required for completion and acceptability to both interviewers and patients) of the MATE.

## Methods

Translation. Two professionals (a psychologist and a psychiatrist working in the field of clinical psychiatry) independently translated the MATE form from English to Slovene for the Slovenian language version of the MATE: Meritve za triažo in evalvacijo odvisnosti, MATE\_sl 2.1, through an interactive process with the authors, under the conditions for translation and adaption of the MATE materials stated by the authors of the instrument.

Afterwards, in July 2015 in Amsterdam (The Netherlands), the authors provided the translators with training in the use of the instrument.

Training. After the approval by The National Medical Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia (attached), a brief training of staff members on how to use the instrument has been performed.

Interview. The interviews of the patients took place 10 days after their routine intake (psychiatric interview), from March 2016 to April 2016 in two hospitals, three health centres and one private practice in Northeast Slovenia, using the Slovenian version

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<sup>3</sup> Neenakosti v zdravju v Sloveniji [Health Disparities in Slovenia]. Ljubljana: Inštitut za varovanje zdravja [Public Health Institut]; 2011. Available at [http://cizr.si/files/neenakosti\\_v\\_zdravju\\_v\\_sloveniji\\_615.pdf](http://cizr.si/files/neenakosti_v_zdravju_v_sloveniji_615.pdf) (accessed 31 August 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Slovene Regions in Figures 2014. SURS. Available at <https://www.stat.si/doc/pub/REGIJE-2014.pdf> (accessed 8 October 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Kuhar A, Juvancic L. Can EU Accession Reduce Regional Development Disparities in Slovenia? Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science. 2007;13: 433-447.

<sup>6</sup> Zorko M, Hočevár T, Tančič Grum A, Kerstin Petrič V, Radoš Krnel S, Lovrečič M, Lovrečič B. Alkohol v Sloveniji [Alcohol in Slovenia]. Ljubljana: Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje [National Institute of Public Health]; 2014. Available at [http://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/alkohol\\_v\\_sloveniji\\_0.pdf](http://www.nijz.si/sites/www.nijz.si/files/publikacije-datoteke/alkohol_v_sloveniji_0.pdf) (accessed 18 July 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Rus-Makovec M, Cebasek-Travnik Z. Long-term abstinence and well-being of alcohol-dependent patients after intensive treatment and aftercare telephone contacts. Croat Med J 2008; 49(6):763-71.

<sup>8</sup> Adamson SJ, Sellman JD, Frampton CM. Patient predictors of alcohol treatment outcome: a systematic review. J Subst Abuse Treat 2009; 36(1):75-86.

of The MATE: MATE\_sl 2.1.

Sample. A convenience sample of 50 treatment-seeking patients in psychiatric services in an outpatient or inpatient treatment, 25 with and 25 without an ICD-10 diagnose of AUD. Exclusion criteria were mental deterioration and acute psychosis.

	In addiction treatment, AUD (N=25)	In psychiatric treatment, no AUD (N=25)
Age (M, SD)	50,5 11,7	43,6 13,0
Gender (%)	M 80, F 20	M 40, F 60
Elementary school	24%	16%
High school-vocational	48%	20%
High school	12%	44%
University	4%	20%
Marital status Yes	68%	48%
No	32%	52%

An example of evaluation with the MATE:

MATE Scores (M, Sd)	In addiction treatment (N=25)		In psychiatric treatment (no AUD) (N=25)	
<b>Indicators for psychiatric or medical consultation:</b>	M	Sd	M	Sd
Characteristics of physical comorbidity	0,8	0,8	0,2	0,4
Undergoing psychiatric or psychological treatment	1,4	0,5	1,7	0,6
Characteristics of psychiatric comorbidity	0,7	1,0	0,8	1,1
<b>Substance dependence and abuse*</b>				
Dependence	4,4	2,0		
Abuse	2,2	1,1		
Severity of dependence/abuse	6,0	2,5		
<b>Physical complaints</b>	11,3	9,0	13,9	7,0
<b>Personality</b>	2,7	1,7	3,3	1,8
<b>MATE ICN</b>				
Limitations – Total	19,7	14,4	25,8	17,0
Limitations - Basic	4,4	5,4	5,5	5,6
Limitations -Relationships	4,8	4,3	3,7	3,4
Care and support	1,5	2,5	2,2	4,3
Positive external influences	5,2	2,3	4,3	2,7
Negative external influences	3,5	3,6	5,0	4,3
Need for care	0,8	2,6	4,2	6,0
<b>Craving</b>	4,4	5,0	0	0
<b>Depression, anxiety, and stress</b>				
Depression	14,9	13,4	23,0	14,7
Anxiety	13,3	11,2	18,8	13,3
Stress	17,0	13,7	25,1	12,2
Depression Anxiety Stress - Total	45,2	37,2	67,1	33,3

Assessment. Assessment of the feasibility of The MATE\_sl 2.1 was performed by a feasibility questionnaire (equivalent to the one already used in the Netherlands and Germany) and an open discussion in focus group of interviewers.

**MATE-interview evaluation form**

For every MATE-interview, answer the following questions

	strongly agree	agree	somewhat	disagree	strongly disagree
1. The respondent has understood the questions well					
2. The respondent considered the questions relevant					
3. The respondent found the interview too long					
4. There were difficulties in doing the interview with the respondent					
5. There were relevant topics that were not addressed in the interview					
6. Total duration of the MATE-interview (in minutes)					.....
7. Which treatment advice was given to the respondent? Describe level of intensity.....					
8. Other comments on this MATE-interview					.....
9. Has permission given for using the data for research?					Yes/No

## Results

### With feasibility questionnaire were assessed:

1) Time required for completing the instrument which was  $M = 32,8$  min ( $SD = 9,4$ ); for patients with AUD:  $M = 36,4$  ( $SD = 10,5$ ) and for patients without AUD:  $M = 29,2$  ( $SD = 6,7$ ), and

2) Acceptability to interviewers and to patients including:

Difficulty: 80% of the interviewers did not have difficulties in doing the interview with the respondent.

Relevance: 86% of the interviewers did not have the impression that relevant topics were not addressed in the interview.

Understanding: 72% of the interviewers said that the respondents understood the questions well.

A focus group of interviewers took place on 22<sup>th</sup> of April 2016: the mean age of interviewers (two social workers, three psychologists and three psychiatrists) was 45,7 years.

Open discussion about the feasibility of the MATE in routine practice of psychiatric services showed the MATE to be a useful tool for systematic assessment, providing relevant information and reflecting the patient's situation. Assessment of need for care was complicated by a lack of transparency of AUD treatment in Slovenia.

The main obstacles for using the MATE in everyday practice are a shortage of staff and time, as well as a particular negative attitude of psychiatrists and social workers towards the use of questionnaires.

### **Interpretation of Results**

The mean time of 36,4 min. ( $SD = 10,5$ ) required for completing the instrument with patients with AUD was a bit shorter (than in the Netherlands or Germany) as a probable consequence of established routine in clinical practice in Slovenia, average age of interviewers and their clinical skills.

Module 4. Substance dependence and abuse and Q.1. Craving of the MATE were not used when interviewing patients in the group without AUD and consequently the mean time required for completing the instrument was even shorter,  $M = 29,2$  min. ( $SD = 6,7$ ).

The interviewers in the focus group pointed out the need for adjustments of the translation of the ICN and the personality questionnaire. Through further discussion with the authors regarding the former need (adjustments of translation of ICN) it was decided that some additional training of staff could be more useful than a retranslation. Regarding the latter need (adjusting the translation of the personality questionnaire, particularly the terms "impulsive" and "perfectionist", which patients were usually not familiar with) it was decided to add more colloquial expressions as "nagel" and "popolnost" to the existing translation.

### **Conclusion**

The MATE is a feasible instrument for evaluation of treatment seeking patients in psychiatric services in Northeast Slovenia.

### **Recommendations**

The MATE is to be used for evaluation of patient predictors of alcohol treatment outcome in Northeast Slovenia.