

SUMMARY MEASURES FOR LONGITUDINAL STUDIES IN PALLIATIVE CARE

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In palliative care research, where the interest is often to study the development of patient conditions over time, it is common to take repeated measurements during the course of the study. The analysis of such data sets is not simple because of the multidimensional nature of the response variables. Different strategies of analysis, such as independent analysis, summary measures approach and random coefficient models will be briefly examined in terms of appropriateness and applicability. The summary measures approach, which consists in calculating a summary statistic for each patient using his set of repeated measurements and then in applying more conventional univariate analyses, has proved to be simple to use, widely applicable and clinically meaningful. A description of different types of summary measures useful in palliative care along with some cautions necessary in this method application, will also be presented.