Author's response to reviews

Title: Measurement of Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms: Linguistic Validation of the Wisconsin Smoking Withdrawal Scale (WSWS) in Malay

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Author's response to reviews: see over
April 2, 2010

Nina Titmus
Scientific Editor
BMC – Series Journals
London
WC1X8HL

Dear Sir,

Revision of Manuscript No. 6670699173266422 – Measurement of Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms: Linguistic Validation of the Wisconsin Smoking Withdrawal Scale (WSWS) in Malay

Thank you for your e-mail dated March 25, 2010, containing the constructive comments of the Editor and two reviewers on the above manuscript. We very much appreciate the comments and have revised the manuscript accordingly as attached. We believe the comments have helped in enhancing the quality and scientific merit of the study.

We have also included below letters detailing our responses to the comments of the 2 reviewers.

Based on the reviewers’ advice, we have incorporated all the necessary changes into the revised version of the manuscript.

1. Please note that changes are made using track changes menu within the revised manuscript.
2. We have now added statement regarding ethics approval of this study in the method section (page 5, line 11 – 13) as below:
   “Approval for the conduct of the study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Universiti Sains Malaysia.”

Thank you and the reviewers for the time spent on this manuscript.

We look forward to receiving your kind response.

Sincerely yours,

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Re: Ms. No. 6670699173266422

Authors’ Responses to Reviewer #1

Many thanks to the reviewer for such constructive comments, which have significantly enhanced our manuscript, entitled “Measurement of Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms: Linguistic Validation of the Wisconsin Smoking Withdrawal Scale (WSWS) in Malay”.

We are pleased to inform you that we have accepted the changes you recommended or comments you had made and we have revised the paper accordingly. We strongly believe that your comments have considerably improved the scientific merit of this study.

We have now deleted Table 1 from the manuscript, as suggested.

We hope the revised manuscript and this response letter have addressed the concern raised by the reviewer and would provide a satisfactory revision.

Once again, thank you for your constructive comments and recommendations to improve this piece of work.

Sincerely,

The Corresponding Author
Re: Ms. No. 6670699173266422

Authors’ Responses to Reviewer #2

We are very thankful to the reviewer for such constructive comments, which have significantly enhanced the manuscript entitled “Measurement of Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms: Linguistic Validation of the Wisconsin Smoking Withdrawal Scale (WSWS) in Malay”

We strongly believe that your comments have considerably improved the scientific merit of this study.

We are pleased to inform you that we have accepted the changes you recommended or comments you had made and we have revised the paper accordingly.

We provide the responses below detailing to each of your comments (stating what changes have been made and/or highlighting them using the track changes menu within the revised manuscript).

We hope the revised manuscript and this response letter have addressed the issues raised by the reviewer and would provide a satisfactory revision.

Thank you for your constructive comments and recommendations to improve this piece of work.

Sincerely,

The Corresponding Author
Detail Responses to the Comments of Reviewer #2

Reviewer’s comment 1:
1. ABSTRACT: It seems lengthy and contains some unnecessary details, especially in the Methods and Results section.

Authors’ Response:
We agree with the reviewer’s comments and we have incorporated appropriate changes by deleting unnecessary details in the abstract. The “Methods” and “Results” sections of the abstract now read:

Methods: A seven-member translation committee conducted the translation process using the following methodology: production of two independent forward translations; comparison and reconciliation of the translations; backward translation of the first reconciled version; comparison of the original WSWS and the backward version leading to the production of the second reconciled version; pilot testing and review of the translation, and finalization.

Results: Linguistic and conceptual issues arose during the process of translating the instrument, particularly on the title, instructions, and some of the items of the scale. In addition, the researchers had to find culturally acceptable equivalents for some terms and idiomatic phrases. Notable among these include expressions such as “irritability”, “feeling upbeat”, and “nibbling on snacks”, which had to be replaced by culturally acceptable expressions. During cognitive debriefing and clinician’s review processes, the Malay translated version of WSWS was found to be easily comprehensible, clear, and appropriate for the smoking withdrawal symptoms intended to be measured.

Reviewer’s comment 2:
2. METHODOLOGY: The authors are kindly invited to provide a few references when they are describing forward and backward translations and pilot testing.

Authors’ Response:
The authors concur with the reviewer on the need to provide references in describing the linguistic validation processes. Relevant references have now been provided. Please see the changes below:

METHODOLOGY

The development of patient-reported outcomes measures such as WSWS for cross-cultural comparisons requires achieving “conceptual equivalence” between the original instrument and the target translation instrument [14-16]. Conceptual equivalence in the context of the current study is the absence of differences in meaning and content between the WSWS
source language (U.S. English) and the translated version (Malay) [16]. This is achieved through a process called linguistic validation and cultural adaptation [14, 15, 17], as described henceforth. The cultural adaptation encompasses two essential and complementary stages: a translation stage to achieve linguistic validity of the questionnaire in the target language and psychometric evaluation. This paper aims to describe the linguistic validation of WSWS to produce a translated version in Malay language that was conceptually equivalent to the original version, as well as clear and easy to understand. Approval for the conduct of the study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Universiti Sains Malaysia.

**Professional requirements**

A seven-member translation committee involving investigators from various schools and translators from School of Languages, Literacy and Translation (SoLLaT) at Universiti Sains Malaysia was formed. The professional translators from SoLLaT were selected based on their cognate experiences and track record of success in linguistic validation of quality of life or similar instruments. The WSWS validation was conducted in close collaboration between the translation committee comprising the above individuals and the copyright owner/developers of the questionnaire. The linguistic validation processes outlined in the methodology section comprise of the general procedures derived from the literature and internationally accepted methodology [13-18].
**Forward translation**

We obtained permission for the cultural adaptation and linguistic validation of the WSWS in Malay from the original questionnaire developers and the copyright owner at the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention. All the concepts in the original questionnaire were clearly defined. The aim of the forward translation step was to produce a version in the target language (Malay) that is conceptually equivalent and close to the original WSWS in meaning. Two professional translators, who are native Malay speakers, bilingual and proficient in English, undertook independent forward translations of the original English questionnaire into Malay [14, 15, 17]. Comparison and reconciliation of the translations was done in a series of meetings between the investigators and the translators. Linguistic issues that arose were resolved by way of further consultations and consensus. The first reconciled version was developed in Malay based on the two forward translations and reconciliation.

**Backward translation**

A backward translation of the reconciled language version was produced in the source language (U.S. English) by a professional translator, native English speaker and bilingual in the Malay language [14, 15, 17]. The backward translation was compared to the original WSWS, leading to the production of the second reconciled version in Malay. Similarly, during this process, translation discrepancies and linguistic issues arose, and modifications were made accordingly.
**Pilot testing (clinician’s review and cognitive debriefing)**

Two clinicians with cognate experience in smoking cessation reviewed the second Malay reconciled version of WSWS. This step aimed to obtain feedback from experts in the relevant medical field. Relevant feedbacks were incorporated into the second reconciled Malay version. A cognitive debriefing using face-to-face interview was further conducted. The translated questionnaire (second reconciled version) was administered on a sample of seven smokers with low to high level of education who were at different stages of quitting smoking [15, 17]. The sample was conveniently selected based on a sampling frame available at a quit smoking clinic at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The interview was conducted by investigators from the translation team using both rephrasing and probing techniques. The aim of this step was to ensure that the translation (instructions, items and response choices) was acceptable, understood in the way it was intended to be, and the language used was simple and appropriate for the target future users of the scale. The third reconciled Malay version was produced based on the results of the clinicians’ review and respondents’ feedback. A summary report was compiled at each stage of the process.

We would like thank the reviewers once again for their precious comments that have improved the scholarly value of this manuscript.