Author's response to reviews

Title: Measurement properties of translated versions of neck-specific questionnaires: a systematic review.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

Thank you very much for the useful comments made by the reviewers to improve the manuscript. We carried out a revision of our manuscript based on your suggestions. Below you will find a detailed listing of how we have addressed the comments. We look forward to the opinion of the editor and reviewers regarding the revised manuscript and hope that the current version is now suitable for publication in BMC Medical Research Methodology.

Yours sincerely,

Jasper Schellingerhout

Referee #1
I have no revisions to recommend.

Referee #2:
1. Please insert a comment where appropriate regarding the neck specific questionnaires that were reviewed. It is implied throughout the article that these questionnaires are similar and amenable to comparison. This may not be the case. For example, the NDI is a disability index; on the other hand the neck Bournemouth Questionnaire (neck BQ) is a comprehensive questionnaire in which disability ADL is just one of seven scales.

We have added a short description of the purpose of each questionnaire to the results section (see page 9-11, 16).

2. In this sense, the recommendations that are given in this paper, which assume a level playing field, need some revision.

The short description of the purposes of the questionnaires shows that there are some differences with regard to the intended constructs to be measured. However, strong evidence regarding structural validity and content validity is needed, before we can say that there really are differences. Our systematic review regarding the original versions of neck-specific questionnaires shows that this evidence is lacking. Except for the NDI there is no methodologically sound information regarding the content validity of the different questionnaires and for none of the questionnaires a methodologically sound confirmatory factor analysis has been performed.

Moreover, this systematic review shows that a poor translation process and lack of cross-cultural validation affects the validity of a questionnaire. This makes it even more difficult to judge whether the questionnaires really measure different constructs.

So, in our opinion the scientific basis is too small to recommend application of certain questionnaires for a specific purpose.

3. I am surprised that the neck BQ did not merit its original reference, while all the other questionnaires did.

The original reference for the neck BQ has now been added to the results section (see page 10).
4. Please comment on the fact that only papers written in English were reviewed. Given the topic area, do the authors feel they may have missed some important translations?
We agree that we may have missed some translations by excluding non-English papers. However, the leading journals, and as a consequence the most important studies, are published in English. So, research performed in populations with a different native language is generally still published in English. This is illustrated by the large number of articles we retrieved regarding translations of neck-specific questionnaires. Thus, we argue that the most important translations have been included in our study. We have added a paragraph regarding this subject to the discussion section (see page 19).

5. Are there really no translations in Danish??
Our search strategy resulted in one neck-specific questionnaire in Danish (i.e. the Copenhagen Neck Functional Disability Scale). This questionnaire was originally developed in Danish and therefore included in our systematic review of original versions of neck-specific questionnaires. We did not find any translations in Danish.

Editorial Requests:
1. Please add some context information in the Background section of your abstract.
We have now added some context information in the Background section of the abstract (see Abstract).

2. Please ensure your manuscript adheres to the PRISMA guidelines for reporting systematic reviews
Our manuscript adheres to the PRISMA guidelines, i.e. as far as the items in the PRISMA-checklist are applicable to the type of studies considered in this systematic review.