Author’s response to reviews

Title: Performance of health-status scales when used selectively or within multi-scale questionnaire

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PDF covering letter
Re: manuscript “Performance of health-status scales when used selectively or within multi-scale questionnaire” submitted to BMC Medical Research Methodology
Authors: Christina Gummesson, Isam Atroshi and Charlotte Ekdahl

We thank Dr. Raina for his review of our manuscript. The manuscript has now been revised addressing the points raised in the review.

We agree that showing good psychometric properties of the selectively used scales is important. However, maintaining good psychometric properties does not necessarily ensure that the scales would yield similar scores as when administered within the entire SF-36 to allow comparison across studies. Researchers involved in the development of the SF-36 have stated that the deletion of some scales would not permit comparison of the scores with the corresponding scores in other studies or with population norms. To our knowledge, the issue of whether deletion of some scales would influence the responses to, and subsequently the scores of, the remaining scales had not been previously investigated. Therefore, we believe that our study makes a useful contribution to the literature by demonstrating that the scores yielded from administering selected SF-36 scales were similar to the scores yielded by these scales when the entire SF-36 was administered and accordingly can be compared with the corresponding scores in studies that used the entire SF-36 and with population norms. This facilitates interpretation of the scores when selected scales are administered.
We have further clarified this point in the Background section (page 3, line 14-19) and in the Discussion section (page 5, line 20-26).

Compulsory revision:
1. The order of administration is stated in the methods (page 3, line 36-39) and commented on in the Discussion (page 6, line 27-30).

2. In Table 1 different symbols have now been used as requested.

Sincerely,

Christina Gummesson