Reviewer's report

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

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**Reviewer:** Parminder Raina

**Level of interest:** A paper of limited interest

**Advice on publication:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the compulsory revisions

**Title:** Performance of Health Status scales when used selectively or within multi-scale questionnaire

**Authors:** Christina Gummesson, Isam Atroshi and Charlotte Ekdahl

**Summary:**
The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the performance of three sub-scales from SF-36 generic health questionnaire as standalone measures or within the entire SF-36 to patients with musculoskeletal disorders. The questionnaires were completed twice by two groups of patients in an orthopedic department prior to and during their visit. First group (n=80) completed 3 subscales of SF-36 on one occasion and the complete SF-36 on the second occasion. The second group (n=62) completed the entire SF-36 on both occasions.

**Review:**
This is reasonably well-written paper. The conclusions reported by the authors are adequately supported by the data presented in the paper. Title and the abstract convey accurately what has been found. The paper itself does not have any flaws but I am not clear about what it is actually contributing to the literature. For example, the authors say that previous studies have not compared the administration of sub-scales on their own versus complete intact SF-36 instrument. I am not sure why this is important. As several studies have used only the sub-scales and have demonstrated reasonably good psychometric properties. If the psychometric properties turn out to be good for the sub-scales then there is no problem as far as scales are concerned. I think important point is that when you borrow scales from questionnaires such as SF-36, you can not assume that sub-scale is going to maintain its psychometric properties of the original complete instrument.

This paper might be of low to modest interest to researchers in general but might be of value to those who work in this particular area. But generally I feel that it is of limited value.

**Compulsory revision:**
1) Under methods section, the authors indicate that order of administration was reversed. It is not clear from paper how that order was determined. Was it random? Or they just simply divided 80 people into two groups of 40. First 40 got one order and the second group of 40 got the reversed order. What implications this might have on their results?

2) In tables 1 the authors have used * to denote Alpha and ICC (95% CI). I think they should use
different symbols for each footnote.

Advice: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until authors have responded to compulsory revisions as well as how this paper is contributing to the literature.

Declaration of competing Interest:
1) I have no competing interest.
2) I have not received any reimbursements, fees, funding or salary (or hold any stocks) from an organization that may in way gain or lose financially from the publication of this paper.
3) I have no other financial competing interests.
4) I have no non-financial competing interests.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.