Reviewer’s report

Title: The Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool: An instrument to assess spirituality in hospitalised elderly persons

Version: 1 Date: 9 June 2010

Reviewer: Hsiu-Fang Hsieh

Reviewer’s report:

In general, this manuscript might potentially contribute to the state of the science in the area of spirituality. Major considerations are as the following. It would be very interesting to read the results of undergoing study which investigates the psychometric properties of the Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This study used an usual approach in instrument development. Please justify the process used in developing the Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool.

2. Please provide information on review of the existing relevant instrument.

3. “Face validity”? Since the chaplains have some knowledge on the subject matter of this assessment tool, spirituality, is it “content validity”?

4. What is “acceptability”? Is it a type of psychometric test? Please citing reference to support your use of this term?

5. Please explain why only chaplains were invited to review the Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool. For an instrument to serve as a communication tool between disciplines, it is suggested to involve individuals from different disciplines in the development of this new instrument.

6. Regarding the dimension “meaning”, please clarify its definition. It is unclear the definition given is related to “meaning”.

7. In the results section, it is suggested to go into more details on each dimension of spirituality. Information on Table 1 is valuable to warrant more discussions in the text.

8. Please reorganize texts in the results section. Part of the results should be moved into the discussion section, for example, on page 9, “Meaning and Transcendence dimensions are widely recognised as central components of spirituality [31,32]. The Values dimension was warranted by the importance of recognising each patient’s personal values so as to ensure respect for the patient’s dignity and integrity [33,34]. Meanwhile, “Chaplains considered that it was not difficult to identify unmet spiritual needs during the patient interview. In contrast, assessing the severity of unmet spiritual needs proved more problematic... The chaplains noted that when coping resources were absent, they tended to score more highly the level of spiritual distress than when these resources were present (p. 11)” are more like discussions rather than results.
The other parts of the results are not in the right place and are belonged to methods section, for example, “in order to identify unmet spiritual needs, a 20 – 30 minute semi-structured interview is conducted by the chaplain with the patient after having obtained his/her consent consent (p.9)”.

9. In the discussion section, it is suggested to compare the results of this study with previously published studied. More references would be helpful.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.