Author's response to reviews

Title: Pain in elderly people with severe dementia: A systematic review of behavioural pain assessment tools.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reactions and changes of the author upon the comments of the reviewers
Title: Pain in elderly people with severe dementia: A systematic review of behavioural pain assessment tools.

First of all we would like to take the opportunity to thank the reviewers for their valuable comments and questions raised. We implemented almost all suggestions of the reviewers. Changes and argumentation are listed in the following section.

Comment on reviewer’s report, Sanna Salanterä
The following ‘minor essential revisions’ have been addressed.
* The reviewer pointed out some minor language corrections. The following corrections have been adjusted in the manuscript.
Page 13 para2. first sentence “is AN assessment tool…”
Page 14 para1. “were able TO use…”
Page 19 para2. “GiveN the scoring complexity…”
Page 20, para1. “So THIS quality needs to be….”
Page 22, para1. “created AN artificial …”
Page 23, last para. “Our review…”
Page 24, last para. “concerns about sample sizes and….”

ABSTRACT, result section. The reviewer mentioned that there was an incorrect number in the abstract, TWENTY NINE instead of nine. This is a probably misinterpreted, 29 is indeed correct and consistent with the text on page 9 para1.

The reviewer had some ‘discretionary (optional) revisions’. We considered the suggestions and adjusted the text in the document in respond to the remarks.
*Page 4. The reviewer requested figures/ information about the prevalence of dementia in nursing homes in other European countries. We considered this suggestion appropriate and therefore some information is added (including two additional references numbers 11-12).

* Another question of the reviewer related to the search strategy. To narrow the search strategy, the keywords used and listed in Table 1 do not include the words “tool” and “instrument”. By additionally screening citations and references, to our best knowledge, we have adequately identified key literature on articles/scales.

* Page 10. As a quality check, a small part of the data abstraction process was conducted by two reviewers independently. The reviewer suggested to give the exact number of these data. Therefore we added this information to the manuscript.

Comment on reviewer’s report, Kenneth Craig
* Page 6. The reviewer mentioned that it is inaccurate to state that self-report is the gold standard for pain assessment. We think that the reviewer raises an imaginable comment. Self-report measures can be criticized and are not always the most reliable and accurate assessment method. Therefore we adjusted the text on page 6 by setting a less firm tone.
*Page 7.* The reviewer recommended strongly to add that “all the measures proposed to date are as responsive to non-noxious stress as they are to noxious events, therefore limiting their use as a specific indices of pain”. We fully agree with the reviewer and added this information (and also inserted a reference as a result of this change, namely reference number 28).

*Page 23.* According to the reviewer the rating criteria described in Table 2 were not applied in detail to the various scales, other than an overall judgement score. This is, however, a misinterpretation since we provided this information in Table 3. Besides the overall judgements, for each instrument the scores are reported per rated criterion. Probably, this information was not noticed because it did not attract enough attention. Therefore we now referred to the score per criteria in Table 3 more explicitly by announcing it in the text on page 23. Furthermore, as requested by the reviewer, on page 10 the percentage of overall agreement was mentioned in the manuscript to provide information about the reliability of the judgments/ scores of the reviewer.

*Page 29.* In our opinion the reviewer raises an important comment about the proliferation of pain scales. Although the reviewer stated that we pointed out this effectively, he preferred a harder hitting message. Therefore, we added a sentence to underline the responsibility of the divers parties to prevent further excessive growth of newly developed tools.

The reviewers’ comments have clearly improved the manuscript, and we hope that the revised article meets the criteria for publication in BMC Geriatrics.