Reviewer’s report

Title: Comparing the Functional Independence Measure and the interRAI/MDS for use in the functional assessment of older adults: A review of the literature

Version: 1 Date: 14 July 2009

Reviewer: Ying-Chih Wang

Reviewer’s report:

In general, this manuscript provides a comprehensive review to accumulate and synthesize past research focusing on the reliability and validity of the FIM and the MDS for use with older adults. The manuscript is well written and provides great details in review procedures and results. There are three recommendations for this paper: a) report specific reliability and validity coefficient range in the results session (see point #2), b) simplify the summaries in Table 2-5 (see point #5), and c) briefly describe the definition of each reliability and validity terminology under Table 1 (see point #4). Last, the author made a strong point that the measurement properties of these instruments are unlikely to have the same psychometric properties with older adults but author did not provide sufficient evidence support.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Page 2, 2nd paragraph - I am not sure that “Instruments that are designed for younger, healthier, and more homogenous groups are unlikely to have the same psychometric properties with older adults” because of “their frailty, comorbidity, and heterogeneity”. Because functional status is an end product of how they perform daily tasks and is assessed in a standardized procedure by trained clinicians, the final score should reflect the elderly subject’s overall functional status. That is, if they are fragile, they would obtain a lower (i.e., worse) functional status score. Therefore, the psychometric properties should be fine. What do you mean by “Instruments …are unlikely to have the same psychometric properties with older adults”? What psychometric properties are you indicating?

2. Page 8, start from “Both instruments were consistently found to be reliable… “ till the end of results session on page 12 – please add more information about the results of reliability or validity coefficients reported from previous literature when you described the results. For instance, when you mentioned that “internal consistency was high for the FIM total score...”, we would get a better idea if you mentioned a range of internal consistency values such as “internal consistency was high (0.90-0.97) for the FIM total score”. The same comments with other sentences as well. For instance, if you indicated that “Dallmeijer and colleagues concluded that the FIM motor (0.89-0.98) has slightly higher internal consistency than the FIM cognitive (0.68-0.88), then we as an audience will get what you meant by higher internal consistency.
3. Page 12, line 22, under Discussion – Could you describe briefly about those
measurement properties of these two assessment tools that are inconsistent
between the older and younger population?

4. Table 1 - I will suggest including a brief definition of each reliability and validity
terminology under Table 1. That is, what is internal consistency reliability? What
is criterion validity?

5. Table 2-5 – In general, the authors make a considerable amount of effort to
collect and report the results. But I personally suggest that these summary
results should be simplified. The main reason is that readers may have difficult
time going through all the details and digesting so much information. The results
should be more organized in a way that report similar findings systematically
across previous studies. Please take a look at Barak and Duncan’s manuscript
(Barak S, Duncan PW. Issues in selecting outcome measures to assess

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Page 2, line 5 (under Background) - The abbreviation of PAC is inconsistent
with the wording. Suggest changing post acute rehabilitation (PAC) to post acute
care (PAC) in rehabilitation or removing the abbreviation.

2. Page 3, line 22 - “The (FIM) motor subscale collects information involving self
care, sphincter control, transfer (?), and locomotion …”

3. Page 3, line 25 - I suggest changing “high scores on the FIM denote patients
that have a high level of independence…” to “higher scores on the FIM denote
patients that have a higher level of independence…”

4. Page 4, line 5 (under InterRAI/MDS) - Please capitalize the “interRAI … is an
international research consortium that…”.

5. Page 5, line 2 - add the abbreviation after Cognitive Performance Scale (CPS).

6. Page 8, line 1 – Is Table 1 or Table 1-5 that summarizes the total sample of
articles that met the criteria?

**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'