Reviewer's report

Title: Assessing perceived well-being among elderly people

Version: 2 Date: 26 August 2009

Reviewer: katariina hinkka

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This is an interesting paper that reports the results of field-testing of a technical device developed to gain information on elderly patients' subjective well-being. The device appeared to be feasible in the study group of 10 elderly persons. A faces scale with 3 choices seemed to catch the mood and quality of life but not pain dimensions of wellbeing when compared to questionnaire data.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

Title and abstract
1. The authors should consider reformulating the Title so that the device approach in assessing wellbeing is embodied in it somehow. – The study design is reasonable when reporting usefulness of a device in assessing well-being but poor when reporting assessing well-being.

Conclusions
2. The last sentence of the Abstract is not justified and should be removed or modified.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

Reporting and Data Deposition
3. I did not understand the x axes of the Figures. Where comes the value from? How is the faces scale converted to numerical values?

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

Study Question
4. The study question could be more unambiguously stated in the paper. It should be clear for the reader whether the point is in assessing practical usage of a novel device or in assessing perceived well-being.

Methods
5. The RAVA questionnaire is a fairly national functional measure for elderly patients. I suppose that the RAVA contains some widely used geriatric instruments like MMSE and GDS. I suggest a Table presenting some essential baseline characteristics of the subjects individually.
6. This study deals with contrasting rating scale and questionnaire data. It is implicitly taken that mood, quality of life and pain are components of well-being. I would expect a conceptual definition of the concept “well-being” in a paper that reports how to approach the measurement of this subjective phenomenon.

Data,
A small convenience sample covering home and sheltered accommodation settings is ok in such a feasibility study as this, I think.

Reporting and Data Deposition
7. A more precise description of the study group would provide a better conception for the reader. A baseline Table for ten subjects is justified since the results are presented separately.

8. The abstract text should be more precise in describing methods in that three questions from the RAI were used. Also, the RAVA should be presented more clearly (if not excluded as such).

9. Methods section should include a description of the instruments with ranges, too.

Discussion and Conclusions
10. The test subject (number 4) was considered as an outlier not understanding the instructions or otherwise unwilling to express his perceptions, because he pressed the “neutral” button every time. The authors seem unwilling to accept this as a real and truthful perception of the subject. It is possible that some persons do perceive their health and well-being as stable and neutral during the two week period of time. All in all there were just three possibilities to choose from. He might have been a person not accustomed to self-observation and recognition of his mood, pain and well-being fluctuations.

11. Feasibility of a device, criterion validity of measurements and sensitivity issues are mixed in the paper. Dis-Con is merely a device with three alternative responses to measure subjective perceptions and it proved to be good. It is another issue to discuss on how well subjective well-being can be measured using a 3-alternative scale and how these dimensions can be compared to questionnaire data of pain, mood and quality of life. - Studies on subjective health have shown that elderly person tend to perceive their health to be better than their objective health status assessed by professionals. Individuals usually compare their health to persons of their own age and that is why e.g. pain can be considered as normal by elderly persons.

12. It should not be stated that (page 10) “Con-Dis does not take pain into account specifically when measuring the perceived well-being of a test subject”. It is not a question of the Con-Dis device but the phenomena measured. A better distinction of technical device feasibility appraisals and target phenomena considerations is recommended.
13. Do the authors have some ideas on how this device could be further exploited? What kind of things could be measured/recorded by using the Dis-Con device? I suggest that the authors discuss on the possibilities of device which this preliminary study indicates; the device could be utilized in gaining information on any dimension of subjective experience that is sensitive to be assessed with a 3-grade scale, couldn't it?

14. A faces scale is worth a sentence or two in a study report like this.

Literature, earlier studies

15. I suggest additions to the Introduction/Background or Discussion sections concerning conceptual definitions of well-being and faces scales for measurements.

Title and Abstract

Title was commented earlier. I have also commented the Abstract earlier concerning methods. As a whole, the Abstract is clearly written including the aim of the study.

Writing
The text is acceptable and easy to read.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.