Reviewer’s report

Title: Measuring health literacy in populations: Illuminating the design and development process of the European Health Literacy Survey Questionnaire (HLS-EU-Q)

Version: 1 Date: 11 February 2013

Reviewer: Andrew Pleasant

Reviewer’s report:

Major suggestions
- authors need to clarify the difference they intend to mean between the measure reported on and "functional health literacy."
- first paragraph should acknowledge growth of concept of health literacy to also be applicable to health system and health professionals, not just patients and the public.
- throughout - the issue of this measure of health literacy relying on self-report needs to be fully addressed. Is currently lacking throughout.
- was there discussion of keeping the cells equal in terms of the number of statements per each? Authors should discuss this and the implications of their choice to go with uneven number of statements per each of their conceptual domains.
- conceptually, there seems to be a great deal of overlap between the domains of disease prevention and health promotion. This is an area that seems worthy of further discussion and explication from the authors. In fact, instead of disease prevention would risk management be a better name for that domain?
- 0.51 is generally not considered an acceptable level of Cronbach's alpha. Authors need to justify this further than simply a low number of items. Higher Cronbach's alpha scores can be obtained with a relatively small number of items
- a higher number of items can artificially inflate the score.

Minor edits/ suggestions.
- abstract - seems like an extra space between 47 and items.
- first and second paragraphs essentially begin with the same sentence.
- page 4 7th line - extra space between and and show
- page 4 4th line from bottom; suggest to add 'and be useful' between clinical setting and to research public health
- could the authors share with readers any challenges encountered and solutions posed during the delphi process? This is becoming increasingly commonplace and I suspect others would appreciate such information.
- page 8 bottom - do the authors have information about participants that
explains the variation between 25 - 90 minutes?
- page 9 - on what basis was the decision to fix components at four?
- page 9 - seems a hard return is needed in front of the subhead expert consultation.
- page 10 - under subhead Translation. What is meant by "based the clearing"?
- page 16 - first full paragraph. The sentence beginning, 'However, as a questionnaire ...' seems unclear.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.