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: 16 May 2013

Reviewer: Lorraine Wallace

Reviewer's report:

General Comments
The authors address an interesting and timely research question. However, as currently written much of the methodology employed needs to be described in greater detail.

Specific Comments

Abstract
1. The Methods section needs to be expanded upon. For instance, please include the languages the instrument was translated into.
2. What are antecedents and precedents of health literacy?

Introduction
3. “According to Pleasant….” This sentence should be the start of a new paragraph. Additionally, it would be best if this information were presented using alternate formatting (i.e., delete the numbering).
4. Why is North-Rhine-Westphalia mentioned? I ask this because other country regions are not identified.

Method
5. “Health literacy is linked to literacy….” This statement needs to be supported with a reference.
6. Specifically, how was the conceptual framework developed and over what time period? For example, did the group meet face-to-face?
7. Greater detail is needed regarding the employment of the Delphi method.
8. Greater detail is needed regarding the focus groups. How many individuals participated? Who lead focus groups? How were participants recruited to partake in the study? Were incentives offered? Why were only three countries represented?
9. Greater detail is needed regarding the pre-testing process. How were participants recruited to partake in the study? Who conducted the interviews? Were incentives offered? Why were only three countries represented?
10. Data analysis should be broken down by qualitative and quantitative
procedures. Again, more detail is needed for both of these types of analyses.
11. How were “experts” identified? Who qualifies as a health literacy expert?
12. Greater detail is needed regarding the plain language check. Specifically, how was this activity carried out?
13. Following translation, were questionnaires piloted tested in groups of patients as well?

Results
14. As currently presented, the Results section is difficult to interpret.
15. It would be helpful to the reader to include sample questionnaire items.
16. The results pertaining to expert consultation are confusing. Please clarify.
17. How were the English and German versions confirmed?

Discussion
18. Additional citations should be included within the first two pages of the Discussion.
19. What about additional study limitations?

References
20. There is an additional reference between #4 and #5.

Table 2
21. Greater detail is needed the “profile” of participants.