Reviewer's report

Title: Field-testing of the Rapid Assessment of Disability Questionnaire

Version: 3

Date: 5 July 2014

Reviewer: Jerome Bickenbach

Reviewer's report:

This is a difficult paper for me to review because the premiss of the research is fundamentally flawed (that the Rapid Assessment of Disability (RAD) questionnaire is somehow based on the ICF model of disability and that it would be a good tool for determining the prevalence of disability). Because of this it was difficult for me to proceed further to look at the psychometric evaluation of RAD, which for me is somewhat irrelevant since RAD does not do what it is claimed it is supposed to do. The problem here undoubtedly lies with the presuppositions of the original developer of RAD, but it taints this paper as well.

Specifically, the model of disability in the ICF is fundamentally mis-described: “The… (ICF) conceptualises disability as an umbrella term referring to the interaction between the functioning of an individual (with a health condition), participation and contextual (environmental and personal) factors.” This is not true. ICF conceptualised disability as the interaction between the health condition and contextual factors. Functioning is not a component of the interaction, but the outcome of the interaction. Functioning is the general term for all domains, from body functions to activities and participation, and disabilities are problems in those domains. The paper distinguishes functioning and participation, which is simply not what the ICF does. There is no requirement for a paper to use the ICF, but if it does it should use it correctly.

But the more fundamental problem I had was that, although the paper correctly criticises the Washington City Group questions for ignoring the impact of the environment on the presence of disability, and though RAD does elicit some environmental information, RAD is simply not a tool that could plausibly be used for prevalence. Most of its questions (and it would have been helpful if those questions were provided in the paper so that the reader did not have to seek them out in other publications) are, roughly, quality of life questions about subjective appraisals of living with disability and knowledge of disability human rights. It is not clear what the correlation would be between the extent of the respondent’s awareness of human rights and the (objective) presence of disability, so the information gathered by RAD, although perhaps relevant to quality of life, would not help to determine prevalence.

In light of this, I am not sure of the value of the psychometric investigation (which I leave to other reviewers more sympathetic to the premiss of this paper to evaluate).
**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.