Reviewer’s report

Title: Listening to patients: Verbal data in the pretesting of ICF based measure of Osteoarthritis health outcomes

Version: 2 Date: 7 April 2010

Reviewer: Ingvild Kjeken

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this manuscript on verbal data in the pre-testing of an ICF based measure of Osteoarthritis health outcomes.

To my opinion, the manuscript provides an excellent insight in to cognitive interviewing techniques and how these can bring forward useful information in the process of developing a questionnaire. However, I have some comments regarding the aims and scope of the article:

Major comments:
• It is unclear to me whether the aim of the article is to describe cognitive interviewing techniques (see aims in the second paragraph page 4) and uses the process of validating the Ab-IAP as an example, or if it is to validate the Ab-IAP (see purpose in the abstract). This vagueness of scope makes the whole article somewhat confusing. As it is described in the present version, it almost seems as if the cognitive interviewing was performed to validate the results from the statistical analysis, not as a validation of the measure itself.

• As a consequence, the title should probably be revised. The current title is rather vague.

• In the study, the 59-items version was used. It is however unclear how the results from the interviews were used in the process of further development of the measure. At page 4, second sentence in the last paragraph, the authors state that “A statistical item analysis on the pool of 59 items resulted in a subset of 35-items and formed the second version of the Ab-IAP (35 item)”. It is unclear to me whether this reduction process was done before the cognitive interviews took place. It also gives the impression that the results from the cognitive interviews did not have any influence on the process of reducing the items. One therefore wonders why the authors bothered to perform the interviews.

• The authors give an excellent example on how the order of the items may influence how the item is interpreted. As the 35 item version of the measure necessarily must present the items in different order, the authors should be careful not to draw any conclusions regarding the validity of the 35-items version based on the cognitive interviews, as these were based on the 59-items version (see second last paragraph page 14).

• The authors sometimes start discussing the results in the reporting of results section (see second last paragraph at page 10 or last paragraph before the
heading Conceptual issues at page 13 as two examples).

• Even if the results provide many excellent examples of the problems and misunderstandings patients are faced with when completing functional measures, it is very unclear how the results from the interviews were used in the process of developing the measure. Which of the 59 items are not included in the 39 items version? Did the results from the interviews lead to rewording of some of the questions or to presenting the items in another order?

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Minor comments:
• The AbIAP is sometimes determined as a Measures (plural)(see first sentence in background page 3), while later in the manuscript it is determined as a measure.

**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.