Reviewer’s report

Title: Cross-cultural adaptation and validation of the Physical Therapy Outpatient Satisfaction Survey in an Italian musculoskeletal population

Version: 1 Date: 6 January 2013

Reviewer: Gustavo Zanoli

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REVIEWER dr. Gustavo Zanoli

Overall comments:

The authors should be congratulated: this is an interesting study that falls within the scope of a musculoskeletal journal. It is a cultural adaptation study so its content is not entirely new, but the methods are well established and sound. Its main aim, which is to culturally adapt and validate the Physical Therapy Outpatient Satisfaction Survey, is nicely met. Very little work is needed before it can be considered, in my opinion, useful and acceptable for publication.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   
   Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   
   Yes

3. Are the data sound?
   
   Yes

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   
   Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   
   Yes (minor suggestion, see below)

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   
   Yes

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   
   Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. I believe the test retest values in some cases are lower than expected. Could this depend on the timing of the evaluation, and therefore reflect a real change in opinion rather than an unreliability of the instrument?
2. It would be interesting to include expectations, comorbidities and HRqoL evaluation in future studies, to further explore the correlations of patient’s satisfaction with PT
3. The main limitation of this study is the large number of unanswered items (I do not know) in the COST questions. This underlines the great difference between Italian PT patients in the private and public sectors. Patients who have access to a public service and do not pay for it, in my experience, have very different expectations compared with private patients who pay for the treatments themselves. Very often, “public” patients have chronic conditions and wait for months for their treatment, so they don’t expect resolution of symptoms but rather some sort of “palliative” care, which helps them to get along with their condition. They might value other things more, such as interaction with the therapist. Similarly, patients who get treatments reimbursed by their own private medical insurance are very different from those whose therapies are reimbursed by a third party insurers (e.g. after a car accident). They usually go to different structures. Public and private facilities usually “compete” for different markets, and physiotherapists working in the different settings might have different approaches, because their reward varies a lot. Public structures have long waiting lists of patients, so they don’t have to look for them, their priorities (and consequent economic rewards) are usually set by “political” or administrative decisions, whereas for the independent private PT the satisfaction with the outcome of care in the single patient (no matter how achieved) is usually the best way to ensure more patients coming in the future (and thus economic reward). It would be interesting to have a single instrument to measure different degrees of satisfaction, but I am not sure that this can be achieved without asking from the
start which the expectations from treatment are. Maybe a preference-based instrument could be more appropriate to measure satisfaction across different settings in a mixed system such as the Italian one. I wonder whether these “random reflections” can be of any use to the authors, either in their discussion or in the analysis of their present data (confirming or disconfirming my suggestions) or in designing future studies.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have been co-author of some of the authors in the past

As a clinician I see patients within Physiotherapy settings (both public and private)