Reviewer's report

Title: The Disabilities of the Arm, Shoulder and Hand Questionnaire (DASH) can measure the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

Version: 1 Date: 6 June 2008

Reviewer: Eva Grill

Reviewer's report:

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

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

The background section is somehow incoherent. I would recommend relocating the detailed description of the method and the DASH to the methods section.

Methods: Describe the background of the participants. Did they have any expertise in assessment, rehabilitation, disability issues?

Table 1: It is unusual to report t-values instead of p-values.

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

To my knowledge the ICF defines health domains and health-related domains, being described from different perspectives (body, individual, society) in two lists, Body Functions and Structures and Activities and Participation. The categories which are contained in those lists may be consequences of disease and thus serve as health outcomes. The linking of health status measures to categories of the ICF is a reasonable way to gain knowledge about the content validity of measures and to compare them among each other. This is a major effort which has already been undertaken for a multitude of measures, also quite recently for the DASH (Silva Drummond, Ferreira Sampaio et al. 2007). Methods have been established for this linking process (Cieza, Geyh et al. 2005).

This is the reason why I cannot see the value of the exercise and analysis described by this manuscript. Basically, what the authors did was to decide which item of the DASH belonged to which ICF component. This is a less detailed strategy as the straightforward linking procedure which links single items to distinct categories thus inherently allocating items to components. Drummond et al did this for the DASH, and the authors of this manuscript do not give any additional information which might be worth publishing. Although the authors state that they could - in contrast to Drummond et al. - distinguish between Activities and Participation items, this might be just a matter of interpretation, and not very useful for the clinician using the DASH.
Finally, although any complete assessment of a health condition should encompass all components of the ICF including Environmental Factors, single health status measures definitely can be valid without covering all relevant domains - this does not impair their usefulness in specific clinical situations. In fact there will be few measures sufficiently covering all components of functioning.

The title is misleading and should be rephrased.


Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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.