Reviewer's report

Title: Translation and validation of the Vertigo Symptom Scale into German: screening of symptoms prior to vestibular rehabilitation

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Reviewer: Eva Ekvall Hansson

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Translation and validation of the Vertigo Symptom Scale into German: screening of symptoms prior to vestibular rehabilitation

General comments
Studies about translation and validation of measurements and scales are important in order to help the researcher community. The present study is thorough but there is a problem with another existing translation into German. I do not think that the authors have addressed this problem enough in the paper. This is my main concern.

Please find my specific comments below:

Title
Since there is already a German version existing, I think the title should be clearer about the differences between the present study and the study by Tschan. For example: “Translation and validation of the Vertigo Symptom Scale into German: a cultural adaption to a wider German-speaking population”. Also, screening of symptoms is not the aim of the study and should therefore not be included in the title. Major compulsory revision

Abstract
The aim in abstract should be the same as in the paper. The conclusion in the abstract does not address the aim – the use of VSS as screening tool is not the aim of the study. Major compulsory revision
The DHI does not measure handicap in general but self-perceived handicap because of dizziness. The abstract contains several abbreviations, which preferably is avoided in abstract. Minor essential revision

Introduction
I think it would be appropriate to give information about the study by Tschan in the introduction and to give an explanation why the present study is important (the cross-cultural adaptation). Major compulsory revision

In the first paragraph, line 4 it should be: “80 percent of the patients in a survey” instead of the survey. In paragraph 2, line 2, it should be “by individually tailored"
instead of the individually. Minor essential revision

Aim
The first part of the aim is clear: to perform a translation and a cross-cultural adaption as well as investigate validity and reliability of the new version. The second part is vaguer: what do you mean by “associations” – what kind of associations is it? Also, I think you should mention the specific scales you intend to use instead of “other questionnaires”. The last sentence should be moved to method. Major compulsory revision

Methods
The method-section is very accurate written and easy to follow. On page 7, second paragraph, line 4 to 6: please add a reference. Also, on page 8, second paragraph, line 10; please add a reference about ICC. Major compulsory revision

Analyses
Please declare what statistical package was used. Major compulsory revision

Results
Also clear and accurate written except for cross-cultural adaptation, which is missing in the results. Major compulsory revision

Tables and figures
There are six tables and five figures but only the tables and figure one is referred to in the results. Major compulsory revision

Why are both mean and median values shown in table 1? The total study population is given as n=202 but the total study population is 202 participants and 52 healthy controls = 254. The subheading in the table should be “participants” instead of total study population. In table 3, it should be “Switzerland” instead of Zürich and “Germany” instead of Mainz since the other locations is given as Mexican hospital, UK hospital and UK primary care, not cities. Minor essential revision

Discussion
First paragraph should state main findings, not methods. The sentence “After suggestion of some patients……” should be moved to results. On page 13, “Principal component analysis”: the first sentence should be moved to method. Page 14 paragraph “Discriminant validity”; here you give new results and refer to figure 2 and 3, please move to results. On page 16, you refer to figure 4, which is not mentioned in the results. Page 17, first paragraph; new results are mentioned and figure 6 is referred to for the first time. Please move to results. Page 17; limitations of the study: Here you mention the cultural and language differences between German-speaking populations in other countries than Germany. This should be elucidated in the introduction. Major compulsory revision

Page 16, you use the abbreviation “VDI” without explaining it. Minor essential revision
Conclusion
The conclusion is too long. The sentence about further research should be moved to the last part of the discussion. The last paragraph in the conclusion is far too long. The conclusion should only answer the questions in the aim. Major compulsory revision

References

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests