Reviewer's report

Title: A Validity and Reliability Study of the Palliative Performance Scale

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Reviewer: Keith G Wilson

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Review of “A validity and reliability study of the Palliative Performance Scale”

The Palliative Performance Scale (PPS) is being used with increasing frequency to plan for palliative care service needs and to estimate survival duration in patients with advanced disease. This suggests that it is important for researchers and clinicians alike to have solid evidence as to its reliability and validity. In this pair of studies, Ho and colleagues have examined issues of inter-rater and test-retest reliabilities, and addressed the validity of the PPS by conducting interviews with expert users of the measure.

In general, these studies appear to have been done carefully and the generally strong results in support of the PPS are worthy of a wider audience. Nevertheless, there are a number of areas in which the manuscript could be enhanced.

1. The title should be, “A reliability and validity study …” rather than “A validity and reliability study …”, given that the reliability aspects are reported first in the results. (minor)

2. The Introduction needs work. Specifically, there should be more of a review of previous studies that have addressed issues of reliability and validity of the PPS. (major) The brief Introduction is rather focused on Canadian agency/policy recommendations rather than on the psychometrics and correlates of the PPS. These agency reports that may not be available to many readers of this article. If these reports are available on the internet, the websites should be noted in the references. (minor)

3. From a style perspective, there is an overuse of the word “tool”. (minor)

4. The authors need to build a stronger rationale for why this study needed to be done. Presumably, one would undertake reliability and validity studies because little is known about these characteristics of the scale, or there is conflicting evidence, etc. This argument is not developed in the manuscript. (major)

5. The Methods section begins by introducing the objectives of the study, which really belong in the Introduction. (minor)

6. The validity study involves semi-structured interviews with experts, which are then content-analyzed using a qualitative approach. The actual methodology of the analysis should be described in greater detail, however. For example, how many people conducted the content analysis, how was agreement reached as to
the number and nature of the themes, etc. Qualitative research has come a long way in recent years, and this study needs to be fleshed out in order to convince the reader that the methods were rigorous and the results are trustworthy. (major)

7. In Table 2, the 0% row and column could be deleted because they contain no information. (minor)

8. The authors suggest that if the PPS is used routinely in clinical care, then researchers can bypass the Research Ethics Board and speed up their research agenda. Not so: at most institutions, even chart reviews require at least an expedited REB review. This recommendation should be deleted. (minor)

9. There are numerous typographical and format errors in the references. (minor)

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests