Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 11 June 2008

Reviewer: Susan McMillan

Reviewer's report:

This is an important and interesting study. It is important because this is such a widely used scale. The title and abstract are representative of the paper. The methods are pretty unusual; that is, reporting face validity but using such a systematic method. Normally, when investigators go to this much trouble to get validity data, they report a content validity index. Face validity is normally considered to be unscientific and therefore without merit. So, my issue is not with their methods, but with calling it a face validity method which seems to be a denial of the serious approach that was taken to validity. The discussion of the results seems complete and is linked to previous work. I agree with the authors that this is a reliable tool and their data is helpful in diagnosing problems when it is less reliable than we might like.

Some minor essential revisions are needed. First, the box plots are pretty difficult to interpret. I would suggest that the authors color code the two sets of lines used in the x-axis so that the reader can easily differentiate between them. In addition, in Table 2, it is not clear what the values in the cells (boxes) represent. Is it the number or the percent of matches. This needs clarification.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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 declare that I have no competing interests'