Reviewer's report

**Title:** Construction of a Traditional Chinese Medicine syndrome-specific outcome measure: The Kidney Deficiency Syndrome questionnaire (KDSQ)

**Version:** 3 **Date:** 8 November 2011

**Reviewer:** Einar Kristian Borud

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The symptom patterns or syndromes of traditional Chinese medicine is an interesting concept. The objective of the present paper is first stated as an attempt “to find out whether TCM syndrome-specific PRO instruments can be constructed for use in TCM clinical studies”, and then as a test of the psychometric properties of a newly developed "Kidney Deficiency Syndrome Questionnaire" or KDSQ.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. When a new questionnaire is presented, I would like to see the questionnaire, how the items are formulated, a description of the scoring of the questionnaire and an interpretation of the score. How will the questionnaire be used in research and clinical practice? None of these are present in this paper.

2. One of my main concerns is that the development of the KDSQ is based on textbook descriptions and expert opinions of the symptoms and signs of Kidney Deficiency Syndrome (KDS) as the “true source of knowledge”, and the “fact” that the symptoms and signs of KDS per definition is found among menopausal women. These assumptions are however under dispute, see for instance Scheid et al. 1. In a sample of postmenopausal London women they found that “a majority of the factors can be matched with patterns... that do not reflect the treatment of any significant Kidney deficiency. In my opinion it is important to discuss these considerations and their importance regarding the construction of the KDSQ.

3. To make it possible to follow the discussion of the psychometric properties of the KDSQ, I would also like table(s) with the results of the factor analyses, such as the factor loadings of each item.


**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests