Reviewer's report

Title: Cognitive Interviews Guide Design of a New CAM Patient Expectations Questionnaire

Version: 1 Date: 3 December 2013

Reviewer: Tina Cartwright

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Cognitive Interviews Guide Design of a New CAM Patient Expectations Questionnaire

This is an important study to produce a standardized questionnaire to assess treatment expectations in patients with back pain. It reported a thorough process of questionnaire development that was informed by previous work with patients and providers, experts in the field and a review of the literature leading to the testing of preliminary questions in cognitive interviews. A real strength of the study is the bottom-up approach which aimed to capture areas of importance to participants as well as the specific means to accurately evaluate these expectations. In general, the paper was clearly written, but I felt that the length of the results and excessive use of lengthy tables (as well as appendices) detracted from the core content of the findings. I would therefore suggest additional editing of the paper to make it more accessible to the general interested reader. The discussion, however, offered a clear and concise summary and evaluation of the findings.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Although important, I do not feel that any of the revisions suggested below are overly onerous or problematic.

1. The ‘background’ was very brief – although it provided a clear rationale for the study, I would like to see some reference to previous approaches to measuring expectations to provide greater context for the current study.

2. Methods: reference to literature search for published questionnaires (p5) – rather than a list of researchers contacted in Appendix 1, it would be more useful to have a brief summary of the review process (perhaps this is described elsewhere?). These authors/studies are also referred to in Table 1 so there is unnecessary repetition. Table 1 would be better placed as an appendix with authors listed numerically (as elsewhere). Otherwise, the methods were clearly described.

3. As outlined above, greater consideration needs to be given to the content of the results with editing to reduce the length. The use of 13 pages of tables with participant quotes to illustrate meanings of each term is certainly excessive. Thus, careful consideration needs to be given as to how best represent the data
in a concise yet informative manner.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. Table 2 – provide a key i.e. red italicised presumably means that these terms were eliminated.
5. Define FDA (p23)

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

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.