Reviewer's report

Title: Instruments to assess the perception of physicians in the decision-making process of specific clinical encounters: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 26 May 2007

Reviewer: Judith G Baggs

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a nice article comparing instruments on a usefully topic. The analyses were carefully conducted, and the tables will be useful to researchers or clinicians seeking a useful instrument.

The authors give passing mention to "interdisciplinary perspective[s]," in the last paragraph before the conclusion, but I believe the topic is worthy of at least a paragraph in the paper. The authors are welcome to focus on a physician with consideration of patient involvement, but there are others (other physicians, nurses, other providers, families) who are commonly involved. Decision making by a single physician without involving anyone except the patient may take place in a primary care office, but not many other places. In a number of sites of decision making (e.g., emergency departments, ICUs, patients often lack capacity for inclusion in the process).

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I found the Methods section of the paper difficult, particularly the first 2 paragraphs. What did you search for (e.g., research studies using an instrument)? Please clarify just what you were looking for. The terms "records," "published articles," and "reports" are all used seemingly to mean the same thing. Please either be consistent in terminology or explain the differences.

To clarify what you mean by "database" in line 4, first para under Methods, could you please use that same term in the first sentence (e.g., "electronic litersearch of these databases: PubMed..."").

Did you contact instrument authors or authors of the studies you found (para 1 Methods)? Maybe these were always the same person? I don't remember being contacted, but I could have forgotten. What did you say to contacted authors? What was the purpose of the contact?

Para 2 under Methods - You searched for articles (or records or reports), but only in some cases did you "access the full text"? How could you do the analyses you do without having the full text? Please clarify.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Did you access copies of the instruments? You never say.

Data extraction, line 5, the i.e. should be e.g.; there are other types of reliability.

Last para in Data Extraction. I am not clear what you mean by "evaluation domain." Please clarify.

Discussion, line 2. Unclear what timeline you are using for the term "renewed" interest. Was there interest before? When was it renewed? The instruments described were published over a fairly long timeline.

You note that length of instrument is relevant, but that is not a data point in any of your tables. Such information would be of assistance to those seeking an instrument to use.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Why was Medline not one of the databases accessed? Hopefully a quick (?) check will assure you that no instruments were missed.

In the first paragraph of the Background, line 8, the word "choice" implies that physicians make a rational decision about which process to used in decision making. I doubt that is the case for most. I would just say omit the words "choice of which."

I suggest that somewhere you note that you evaluated instruments, most of which were published before the 2003 STARD articles, against STARD criteria

You missed a couple articles by me that are relevant. In 1990 in Nursing Economics I published on the influence of nurse-physician collaboration on satisfaction using the precurser to my CSACD and in 1995 I published on decisions about aggressiveness of care using the CSACD.


What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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 can answer no to all the questions, but my instrument is one reviewed in the article. I don't believe that gives me a non-financial competing interest, but it could influence me favorably or not.