Reviewer's report

Title: German translation of the Alberta Context Tool and two measures of research use: methods, challenges and lessons learned

Version: 1
Date: 25 October 2013

Reviewer: Ann Catrine Eldh

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

I’m pleased to have had the opportunity to review your manuscript “German translation of the Alberta Context Tool and two measures of research use: methods, challenges and lessons learned”, submitted to BMC Health Services Research. In general, I congratulate you to a clever study, presented in this and additional papers.

In general, the paper is of interest to the scientific society. However, I have some major comments, where I suggest your paper requires compulsory revision:

1. Please clarify the aim and make it congruent throughout the paper; At the moment, in the Abstract your suggest the aim of the paper is to “report specific experiences in translating the health care aide instrument versions, as well as challenges and strategies for their solution unique to German residential LTC” whereas in the main text, the aim is phrased as to “describe the translation process, providing a rationale for the translation methods chosen and the strategies applied to challenges”, referring to German long term care (LTC) setting. I suggest the incongruence is primarily with regards to which versions of the tools this paper focus and why you suggest it renders a separate paper.

2. The latter comment above relates to a general issue regarding the number of papers published from your study on translating and testing the ACT in German LTC. Currently, the papers are not transparent in terms of how and why you separate the findings and/or data collections and why you choose to publish what I understand is at least four, possibly more papers, on the translation process and outcomes, rather than collating the different aspects of translation and psychometric testing into fewer but more comprehensive publications. Please provide exhaustive details on the full study, and where this and the other papers sit. In particular, this would avoid the author/s being questioned for salami-slicing the process and/or findings into fragmented publications.

3. If you decide on writing the paper on the HCA version of ACT and other RU measures only, assure the paper focuses on this. In particular, the first paragraph of the Findings is rather ambiguous; you suggest the complete translation process took 16 months. Then you suggest the translation of the HCA forms took 286 days. What does the 286 days represent – calendar or work days? Either way, leave out the other forms if you decide on writing this paper on HCA forms only, and provide details on what the 286 days represent. If work days, is this full...
work days and how many hours does this indicate – or consider excluding if you find that this information is of limited value to the reader.

4. In the abstract (section Results), you suggest you “categorized” the challenges met during the translation process. Yet, this categorization is not described in the methods sections in the main text. Please provide how this was done, when (in relation to the different steps, i.e. 1-9, and measures applied in the translation process) and by whom.

In addition, there is a bothersome presence of German text in the Section Findings - please recognize that this is of limited value in a paper seeking a large international audience through a scientific journal of English origin. As a result, I suggest a further compulsory revision is that you translate full sentences in German, leaving only particular words that cannot be translated into English at all in German, in order to illustrate this issue. By this approach, you would rather support non-German readers in understanding how complex the translation needs to be in German. This would provide better evidence than a quote by Mr. Twain, who even though being a great author still only proposed an (i.e., his own) opinion.

Sincerely
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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.