Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring factors that influence the utilisation of preventive care services provided by General Practitioners in Australia

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Reviewer: Richard Van Dyck

Reviewer's report:

The authors report on a project for development of a standardized and psychometrically sound measuring instrument for factors influencing the utilisation of preventive health services provided by general practitioners in Australia. This topic is of interest and is clearly described in the paper. Relevant domains for measurement were arrived at by a search of the literature, resulting in six domains. Existing scales were adapted and items were added or dropped. After a review by experts and a pre-test with a small number of respondents, a survey with a 79 item questionnaire was conducted among 800 adults from which a usable response rate of 65.6 % was achieved.

The next step was a PCA on these data. I have problems with the way this PCA was conducted. Two minor points are that no information is given on how the number of factors per domain is arrived at (e.g. eigenvalues exceeding a predetermined value; decision based on eigenvalue screeplot or theoretical considerations). A second minor point is that a more parsimonious solution for domain Social Support could have been arrived at with one factor, as it is a known phenomenon that using negatively and positively framed items will tend to produce two factors.

A major concern is that rather than using the complete item set in one PCA, the authors chose to test each domain in a separate PCA. This strategy obscures possible overlap between domains and possible contribution of an item from domain A to domain B. As no correlation matrix is provided between the items nor domains developed, the choice of domains is in no way tested or challenged.

For example: inspecting (table 3) the content of domain Professional attitude towards patient versus Value of general practitioners, I find it very unlikely that no overlap should exist between these domains.

I consider this a major flaw in the present study and I think it should be corrected before publication. This very likely will result in a revision of the model, but that would be a more valuable contribution to science than the present approach that leaves the model untested.