Reviewer’s report

Title: The relationship between health literacy and patient activation among frequent users of healthcare services: a cross-sectional study.

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Reviewer: Maria Dolores Navarro-Rubio

Reviewer's report:
I find this paper very interesting and believe that it can add good knowledge to the topic of patient's empowerment in the health decision making process.

However, in my opinion, there are some specific issues that I think need further attention:

First of all, in the study design section, it is not clear why this cross-sectional part is developed separately if it was part of a randomized controlled trial that was already conducted. This substudy could be included in the trial as baseline data.

Second, the participants' inclusion criteria should be more specific. If physicians identify participants that "they believe would benefit most" or "based in their clinical judgment", and they also "targeted additional patients they considered complex" it is possible to have high variability and, thus, selection bias might occur affecting the results of the study.

Third, as the authors mentioned, the Newest Vital Sign focus only in nutritional labels. Therefore, others aspects of health literacy are not covered by it. Authors should use other indicators (other test) to see if they obtained the same results before concluding that there is no relationship between the studied variables.

Fourth, through biserial correlation, authors can observe if there is an association of the two variables, but they can not assure if there is a casual relationship between them. The results of this analysis showing no association between health literacy and patient activation can not be
taken into account due to the bias in the selection of participants as well as the questionnaire used to assess health literacy.

My recommendation is that authors improve the participants’ selection method, explain more in detail how this study relates with the clinical trial they mention, and include other kinds of measurements of health literacy that take into account the different dimensions of it.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.
No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
No

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