Reviewer’s report

Title: Generic health literacy measurement instruments for children and adolescents: A systematic review of the literature

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Reviewer: Nancy Morris

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well written paper describing the results of a systematic review on generic health literacy measurement instruments for children and adolescents. The authors clearly describe their purpose and method. The PRISMA Figure and tables add to the text nicely. There are a few spots when I think the authors go a bit beyond the data with their discussion and I have detailed that in my comments below. This paper adds to the existing literature and is a helpful contribution to the field.

Specific comments/questions:

Page 9 Lines 47-50. Sentence structure not clear, please revise

Page 13, Line 5. Consider "despite" instead of "regarding" and then delete subsequent word, "surprisingly" in this sentence

Page 13, lines 45-55. Some assumptions by the authors here that a focus on health literacy will lead to better health promotion but there are so many confounding factors related to social, cultural, economic and political climate and the migrant and refugee population that even with great health literacy of all involved - health promotion may not achieve desired goals. Suggest revising to suggest it may facilitate health promotion efforts despite the challenges these populations face.

Page 13, line 58. Consider different word choice for "further, maybe "other"

Page 13, line 61 and page 14 line 0. The sentence, "In order to improve health literacy tools, schools, therefore, seem to be a unique setting" doesn't make sense to me. Why do you say schools are a unique setting for improving health literacy tools?

Page 14 Lines 16-39. The authors discuss the appropriateness of existing health literacy assessment for different age groups. It raises the question as to whether it is even appropriate to assess the health literacy of children under the age of 7. How much do we expect children of this age to be able to access health information, understand it, communicate about it, and use it to make informed decisions about their health? Their numeracy and reading skills would be limited, especially regarding terms often used in health care. I agree that we need to be exposing young children to terms related to their bodies and to healthy foods and activities so that they
have the skills to understand more matters related to their health as they age but this would be different than assessing their health literacy.

Page 15, line 21. Suggest deleting "only" in front of the work poor.

Page 15, lines 34-36. The sentence is awkward as written, health literacy itself can't draw on a pathway - are you referring to the study of health literacy, or development of health literacy measurements?

Page 15, lines 42-44. Suggesting that children and adolescents become involved in the social and cultural construction of health literacy implies that the concept doesn't yet exist…perhaps you are intending that they be involved in the social and cultural assessment of health literacy?

Page 15, lines 51. Not clear what you mean by "the variety of given health literacies"

Page 16, lines 14-36. This is the discussion of health literacy and contextual factors. It's a big leap to say that because instruments have been developed that contain items related to health care, disease prevention, and health promotion that these are the arenas where health literacy is specifically important. When I think of context I am thinking that someone's health literacy may vary in different context's not that the instruments would vary based upon the context. Wouldn't a "solid" instrument assess the concept of health literacy well regardless of the context in which it was administered? What is the key point you are trying to make about contextual factors and the assessment/measurement of health literacy?

Page 17, line 6-7. Suggest deleting the word "far" as it confuses intent of sentence.

Page 17, line 17. Suggest deleting the word "only" and change to "....comparisons are only difficult to undertake.

Page 17, lines 20-23. The sentence "measuring of a broad understanding of health literacy can be narrowing in the concept, too, ...." Is difficult to understand. Do you mean," One study (43) defines health literacy broadly yet the assessment tool only asses eating habits and dental health, leaving out many other constructs of health literacy."?

Page 17, lines 28-21. The sentence would read more clearly with the insertion of the word, "on" for example: "If an instrument has been based on a clear conceptual model....."

Page 17, line 58. Suggest deleting "of" in the phrase "the work providing of the questionnaire items.."

Page 18, Lines 1-2. Awkward sentence structure for "The current measures lack to adequately reflect on the importance given to these factors." - please revise.

Page 18, Lines 9-45. This is the section on limitations. You speak well of the specific limitation to this review but have also identified many of the challenges of conducting such a review which I think consider could consider including here. After reading your paper it seems like one of the
biggest limitations is the various conceptualization/definitions of health literacy leading to varied assessment tools since conceptually they are not all designed to measure the "same thing." Consensus in the field is essential in order to move the science forward. Another limitation worth considering is that there may be a level of cognitive development that is necessary to have adequate health literacy. This is important when assessing the health literacy of young children. Developmentally, is it realistic to expect they are capable of accessing, understanding, comprehending, using health related information - and if so to what degree. Might this vary with developmental age? Assessing the measurement of health literacy among young children is difficult if we haven't clarified the "norm" of health literacy for your children.

Page 19, Lines 15-18. You conclude that it is important to involve children in the development of health literacy measurement tools however you don't actually have data to support this recommendation as you didn't query the literature on this topic. Fine to note that this might be a good idea for development tools in the future.

Few English grammar nuances throughout - for example, the authors use the word 'but" in several places where it would read smoother if they chose the word "and"; inserted "what" instead of "that".

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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