Reviewer’s report

Title: The General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28) as an outcome measurement in a randomized controlled trial in a Norwegian stroke population

Version: 0 Date: 09 Sep 2018
Reviewer: E. (Erik) Buskens

Reviewer’s report:

The authors recognise the need to adequately capture the long-term impact of stroke. They have previously performed an RCT in a stroke (survivor) population, in which they used the instrument scrutinised only in the present study as primary outcome measure. This particular outcome measure the GHQ (28 item version) was developed quite some time ago in another society, and not for a particular patient population. Their choice needs to be elaborated to assess the merits of the present study. Several other techniques e.g. IRT have since been introduced in the health domain to capture the essence of the health problem. Modern instruments have their advantages and thus the choice of the instrument in this particular population needs to be elaborated. As the authors rightfully state patients experience post-stroke psychosocial challenges, which are complex, multifaceted, and affect their rehabilitation and recovery. The question thus becomes what exactly do they aim to capture in the rehabilitation process and the outcome thereof. The GHQ is selected yet without reference to the reason(s) to select.

What follows is a seeming extensive assessment of the instrument in the population of interest, however, without a sound theoretical or experimental basis.

A particular concern is the acclaimed measurement invariance across time points. The two time points of measurement lie 5 months apart in a patient population that certainly is facing a major upset of their life, i.e., it would seem strange that measurement remain stable over the course of a rehabilitation process. In their presentation the authors in my opinion do not show measurement invariance.

As for their discussion and conclusion it remains unclear whether the instrument indeed is suitable to capture the essence of the challenges etc the stroke survivors experience during and after rehabilitation. The rather technical presentation without further reflection is of little help for future researchers or practitioners.

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?
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