VALIDATION AND PSYCHOMETRIC EVALUATION OF A 5-ITEM MEASURE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES: The Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Scale (MOS-SSS, Sherbourne, 1991) is an abbreviated version of the 20-item Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Scale (MOS-SSS, Sherbourne, 1991). The MOS-SSS has established psychometric properties of its items have not been established. We find this gap in evidence problematic given the importance of perceived social support in a range of health-related outcomes. METHODS: The SSS and SSS-5 were administered as a part of a larger study to a random sample of 245 medical outpatients (121 women, 124 men). Participants were randomized to complete the SSS-5 on either paper or computerized format (randomly assigned). Completed questionnaires were returned via secure online entry by participants or in person. RESULTS: Participant demographic and health characteristics were comparable. The SSS-5 exhibited strong internal consistency (α = 0.93) and was strongly correlated with the full length SSS (r = 0.91). CONCLUSIONS: The SSS-5 has good psychometric properties and can be used as a valid and reliable abbreviated measure of perceived social support.

BACKGROUND

• The SSS-5 is an abbreviated version of the Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Scale (MOS-SSS, Sherbourne, 1991).
• This instrument has five items from the MOS-SSS (Figure 1); to assess perceived social support. Each item is scored on a Likert scale and items are summed for a total score (Table 2). RESULTS: The instrument has been used in psychometric research (Ren et al., 1991) but the psychometric properties of the SSS-5 have not been established.
• We recalculated the psychometric properties of the SSS-5 and tested equivalence between paper and web administered formats in a randomized study

METHODS

Study Design
• The study was approved by institutional review boards.
• Participants were recruited from primary care clinics at a large urban university hospital and a community health center to assess health-related quality of life for patients with chronic health conditions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

<table>
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<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>SSS-5</th>
<th>MOS-SSS</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Diagram of Data Collection

Figure 3: SS5 by Marital/Living Status

Figure 4: SS5 by Life Orientation Test Scores

LIMITATIONS

• The study utilized a convenience sample recruited from newspaper and web-based advertisements. The extent to which men may differ in demographic and health characteristics from the overall US population is unknown.
• The interpretation of the data is potentially subject to response bias.