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Development of a reliable and construct valid measure of nutritional literacy in adults

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Abstract

Background

Research into the relation of literacy to health status has not included measures of nutritional literacy. This may be a critical area in the study of chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, which can both relate to obesity and nutrition. This paper details the development and psychometric characteristics of the Nutritional Literacy Scale (NLS), offered as a measure of adults' ability to comprehend nutritional information.

Methods

In order to assess the internal consistency and construct validity of the NLS, demographic data, readability statistics, NLS scores and scores on the Reading Comprehension Section of the Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (S-TOFHLA) were collected in a cross-sectional study of 341 patients from two primary care practices.

Results

The NLS score showed acceptable internal consistency of 0.84 by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Pearson correlation between the NLS and the S-TOFHLA was 0.61, supporting evidence for construct validity.

Conclusion

Given the importance of proper weight and nutrition in the health of the public, as well as the absence of research on literacy skills as related to nutritional concepts, the NLS has the potential to add to the national research agenda in these areas.

