Instrument Translation Models

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Abstract

Reliable and valid Spanish-language instruments for health-related research with the Hispanic population are scarce, and this contributes to the lack of reliable data about factors which influence health-related behaviors in this population. As people of Hispanic origins constitute the most rapidly growing segment of the population in the United States (US), this is a problem of major concern. Translating an existing instrument into Spanish involves a variety of methodological issues that ultimately affect the validity of research studies using the instruments. A comprehensive review, analysis, and synthesis of the literature with respect to cultural and linguistic issues in instrument translation into the Spanish language for Hispanics, and in particular for Mexican-Americans in the US, was conducted.

The study revealed a total of six translation models. These were the (a) one-way translation model; (b) double translation model; (c) translation by committee model; (d) Repeated forward and backward translation model; (e) process of translation and cultural adaptation of an instrument model; and (f) cultural adaptation of survey instruments model. Only the last two models specifically addressed cross-cultural adaptation of instruments, which included input from the target population for determining the appropriateness of translated constructs. Instruments which included a cultural adaptation component produced the best psychometric properties. This analysis also revealed that although there are a number of studies that describe the process of instrument translation into Spanish, only a small number were specific to Mexican-Americans. This is of concern since the Mexican-American population is the largest growing segment of the Hispanic population

In addition, it is apparent that many researchers may be underestimating the importance of translation methods in developing translated instruments, which will impact the validity of health- related research for Hispanic populations in the US.