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Error in Charing Cross Venous Ulcer Questionnaire (CXVUQ)

We have encountered an unexpected problem with the Charing Cross Venous Ulcer Questionnaire (CXVUQ), an ulcer-specific quality-of-life instrument previously reported in this journal.¹ When designing the Honey as Adjuvant Leg ulcer Therapy (HALT) Trial (ISRCTN06161544), the CXVUQ appeared to be a promising tool that would complement the more generic Short Form-36 (SF-36).

When we analyzed the data, however, two domains (cosmesis and emotional status) scored considerably higher than the other domains (Table), which seemed incongruent with the scoring of CXVUQ. Low scores on the CXVUQ indicate better quality-of-life outcomes. We therefore investigated the scores of all those participants with healed and unhealed ulcers at end point. The CXVUQ should have discriminated between those that did heal and those that did not, irrespective of treatment. Participants with healed ulcers should have scored lower (ie, better) than those with unhealed ulcers at end point. However, the opposite was true for cosmesis and emotional status.

This problem seems to have been created by an error in the original publication. Questions three and seven were incorrectly scaled and thus the best answers score highest instead of lowest. When we recoded the data so that the best answers gave the lowest scores, the data were more congruent and participants with healed ulcers did indeed score lower than those with unhealed ulcers. Another research group using the CXVUQ has independently

arrived at the same solution (Irene Wong and David Thompson, personal communication),² and we have since been able to confirm the error from a second publication by the instrument's authors.³ This publication is not listed in Medline or CINAHL, and will only come to user's attention if they search EMBASE or SCOPUS.

The CXVUQ is a disease-specific instrument that has excellent potential for use in clinical trials. It appears to have discriminant characteristics,⁴ unlike the Hyland scale.⁵ However, future users should be aware of the problem we have outlined and its solution.

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Table. Mean domain scores for healed and unhealed cohorts using uncorrected and corrected variables

| Domain | Uncorrected results* | | Corrected results* | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| | Healed | Unhealed | Healed | Unhealed |
| Social interaction | 25.7 ± 11.1 | 37.6 ± 16.1 | 24.9 ± 12.2 | 38.3 ± 17.4 |
| Domestic activities | 24.9 ± 11.6 | 33.9 ± 18.0 | 23.8 ± 12.9 | 34.9 ± 19.8 |
| Cosmesis | 83.6 ± 11.5 | 72.7 ± 14.8 | 30.8 ± 14.8 | 44.4 ± 18.5 |
| Emotional status | 78.2 ± 15.5 | 65.4 ± 18.7 | 34.0 ± 17.9 | 49.6 ± 21.8 |

*Data presented as mean ± standard deviation.