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**eMSQOL-29: Prospective validation of the abbreviated, electronic version of MSQOL-54**

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**Full title:**

eMSQOL-29: Prospective validation of the abbreviated, electronic version of the MSQOL-54

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**Running title:** Prospective validation of the abbreviated, electronic version of the MSQOL-54

**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** We recently devised a shortened version of the 54-item Multiple Sclerosis Quality of Life (MSQOL-54) in paper (MSQOL-29, consisting of 25 items forming 7 subscales, and 4 single items; one filter question for 3 'sexual function' items) and electronic format (eMSQOL-29).

**Objectives:** To prospectively assess eMSQOL-29 psychometric properties, acceptability/equivalence vs. MSQOL-29.

**Methods:** MS patients (n=623; EDSS range 0.0–9.0) completed eMSQOL-29, Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, Functional Assessment of MS (FAMS), European Quality of life Five Dimensions-3L, and received EDSS and Symbol Digit Modality Test (SDMT). Equivalence vs. MSQOL-29 was assessed in 242 patients (randomized cross-over design).

**Results: '**Sexual function' items were filtered out by 273 patients (47%). No multi-item scale had floor effect, while 5 had ceiling effect. Cronbach's alpha range was 0.88–0.90. Confirmatory factor analysis showed good overall fit, and the two-factor solution for composite scores was confirmed. Concurrent validity was sub-optimal for 'cognitive function' (vs. SDMT, r=0.25) and 'social function' (vs. FAMS social function, r=0.38). eMSQOL-29 equivalence was confirmed, and its acceptability was good.

**Conclusions:** eMSQOL-29 showed good internal consistency, factor structure, no floor effect, while most subscales had some ceiling effect. Concurrent validity was sub-optimal for two subscales. Equivalence and acceptability were good.

## INTRODUCTION

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic disease of the central nervous system characterized by a multiplicity of symptoms and signs, and a variable impact on physical, psychological and social functioning. Health-related quality of life (HRQOL) and other patient-reported outcomes (PROs) are key for assessing the disease from the patient's perspective [1-3]. However, it is recommended that PRO questionnaires should be as brief as possible in order to minimize respondent burden [4, 5]. For MS patients in particular, presence of fatigue and impairment of sustained attention are common symptoms, which can limit patient's ability to complete long PRO instruments [6]. From 1995 a number of MS-specific HRQOL instruments have been produced [6-9]. With 51 translations available [https://eprovide.mapi-trust.org/instruments/multiple-sclerosis-quality-of-life-54], the 54-item MS Quality of Life inventory (MSQOL-54) is the most-used MS-specific questionnaire [10]. In a previous study phase, we shortened the MSQOL-54 using a combination of psychometric analyses (factor analysis and Rasch modelling) applied on a dataset of 635 MS patients who completed the MSQOL-54, and input from MS/HRQOL professionals and MS patients [11]. The resulting MSQOL-29 consists of 7 multi-item and 4 single-item subscales, used to form two composite scores, consistent with the theoretical construct used to develop the original instrument [12]. The MSQOL-29 requires approximately 10 minutes to complete, corresponding to half of the MSQOL-54 completion time [13]. Nonetheless, the high correlation of MSQOL-29 subscale and composite scores with those of MSQOL-54 suggests that eliminating items and subscales did not substantially change the HRQOL dimensions found for the original instrument. The electronic version provides an alternative administration mode, and can be integrated within electronic health records and disease registries. Another advantage of electronic mode of administration is the score calculation routine which, by reducing computation burden and errors, should facilitate the use of HRQOL measures in clinical practice, and ultimately the patient-

provider communication and shared decision-making. However, to have confidence in the validity of data collected using different administration modes, and to allow pooled analyses when different versions are used within and between studies, between-mode equivalence and acceptability must be formally evaluated [14-16].

Here are presented the results of a prospective study aimed to assess MSQOL-29 acceptability, validity, and reliability, and to confirm its factorial structure in an independent population. In addition, we assessed the equivalence of the electronic version to the paper version.

## METHODS

### Participants

We used a cross-sectional design with consecutive sampling, and a nested longitudinal equivalence study. Participants were included with a clinical diagnosis of MS[17] and were at least 18 years of age, able to read and understand Italian, and to provide written informed consent. Recruitment occurred at 5 centres across Italy (Foundation IRCCS Neurological Institute C. Besta, Milan; University Hospital San Luigi Gonzaga, Orbassano, Turin; IRCCS S. Lucia Foundation, Rome; G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, Chieti; University Hospital Policlinico Vittorio Emanuele, Catania). The study was approved by the ethics committee of the 5 participating centres.

### PRO measures

The MSQOL-29 consists of 7 multi-item subscales: ‘physical function’ (6 items); ‘sexual function’ (4 items); ‘bodily pain’, ‘emotional wellbeing’, ‘energy’, ‘cognitive function’, and ‘health distress’ (3 items); and four single-item subscales (‘social function’, ‘health perceptions’, ‘overall quality of life’, and ‘change in health’) which form two composite scores (Physical Health Composite, PHC;

Mental Health Composite, MHC) [11]. A filter question (*'During the past 4 weeks, have you had an active sexual life?'*) is present after the first 'sexual function' item ('*How much of a problem was lack of sexual interest for you during the past 4 weeks?')*. If the reply is "no", the other 3 'sexual function' items are not shown (eMSQOL-29) or skipped (paper format). An integrated scoring routine is available for the eMSQOL-29, to ease score calculation and interpretation.

The FAMS consists of a generic core HRQOL measure (the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-General scale), supplemented with MS specific items [18]. The 59 items of the FAMS are divided into 6 subscales: 'mobility', 'symptoms', 'emotional well-being', 'general contentment', 'thinking/fatigue' and 'family/social well-being'. Only items 1–44 are included in the total score (0–4 score range for each), which can range from 0 to 176 (best HRQOL).

The European Quality of life Five Dimensions-3L (EQ-5D-3L) is a standardized instrument providing a generic measure of health, via a descriptive system addressing 5 health state dimensions ('mobility', 'self-care', 'usual activities', 'pain/discomfort', and 'anxiety/depression'), each scored on a three-level scale. A visual analogue scale (VAS) is also included to measure overall health. By combining every characteristic level of the descriptive system, a total of 243 profiles can be obtained, within the range 11111 to 33333 (worst health-state). The profiles can be assigned an index score (utility value, available for several countries included Italy) which represents preferences for that profile derived from a general population survey [19, 20]. The index has a maximum value of 1 (full health), an anchor of 0 for a state equivalent to being dead, and values <0 for states regarded as worse than being dead.

The HADS is a screening tool comprising 14 multiple-choice items (0–3 score range for each), 7 probing symptoms of anxiety and 7 of depression. HADS Anxiety and Depression scores are obtained, which can range from 0 to 21 (most severe symptoms) [21].

**Procedure**

All participants signed the informed consent form, then completed the eMSQOL-29[11], a section on questionnaire acceptability (see below), and (in citation order), Italian versions of the following inventories: the HADS[22], the FAMS[23], and the EQ-5D-3L. All the questionnaires were completed by the patients on the PC. The MS clinician administered the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS),[24] the symbol digit modality test (SDMT)[25], and recorded patient general and clinical information. eMSQOL-29 acceptability and usability were assessed by rating (0-10 VAS) the suitability of the MSQOL-29 as a MS-specific QOL inventory; and the following four characteristics: being taxing, boring, difficult to read, and difficult to complete. Each characteristic was rated on a 0-3 Likert scale, followed by a multiple-choice question exploring the main reasons for difficulty.

A minimum of 200 participants from Milan and Orbassano centres completed both paper and eMSQOL-29 in random order, and in two-week interval. Re-test was performed at patient home (except for patients preferring to complete at the MS centre). At the end of the visit, participants assigned to the electronic-paper order were given a closed envelope, to be opened after two weeks, containing the MSQOL-29 questionnaire and a pre-addressed, return-paid envelope. A few days before re-test date, participants assigned to the paper-electronic order received an email with the link to the website containing the eMSQOL-29.

After re-testing, eMSQOL-29 acceptability was assessed as reported above; in addition one multiple-choice item assessed the preferred version (electronic, paper, no preference).

One week after the expected completion/return date, patients who did not complete/return the questionnaire received a reminder (email or phone call).

**Statistical analysis**

Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (benchmark value >0.70). For each MSQOL-29 subscale, we determined presence of floor effect (>10% of the patients scoring minimum) and ceiling effect (>10% of the patients scoring maximum). Concurrent validity was evaluated by correlating MSQOL-29 subscale scores and pertinent subscale/scale scores of FAMS, EQ-5D-3L, and HADS (Pearson's r). We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the two-factor structure proposed by Vickrey et al. for the MSQOL-54,[10] using the following cutoff criteria for the goodness of fit indices: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) <0.05, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ≥0.95, Standardized Root Mean square residual (SRMR) ≤0.08. Criterion validity of MSQOL-29 subscales/scales was assessed using the EDSS (two groups, cutoff point 4.5) and the HADS (two groups, cutoff point 8.0 for both anxiety and depression) as criterion variables. Independent sample t-test and Cohen's *d* were used for these comparisons. A *d* of 0.50 corresponds to a moderate effect size, and a *d* of 0.80 to a large effect size.

For each of the 11 MSQOL-29 subscale scores, equivalence of paper and electronic version was assessed using a randomized cross-over design, which allows for testing of version (paper, electronic), order (test, retest) effects, and their interactions (sequence). The required sample size (185 patients) was calculated under the following assumptions: intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) [26] between versions of 0.80 (vs. a reference value of 0.70), 80% power of detecting this difference, 5% alpha error, two-tailed test, and 20% missing items plus drop-outs [27]. In addition to the ICC, we assessed the effect size statistic (benchmark value ≤0.20),[28] and linear regression model for repeated measures design, with an exchangeable correlation structure of the errors. The model included the following independent variables: MSQOL-29 version, order, sequence, centre (Milan, Orbassano), sex, age, EDSS (≤2.5, >2.5) and disease course (relapsing-remitting, primary or secondary progressive).

All the analyses were performed with SAS version 9.4 and LISREL version 8.72. Significance level was set at 0.05.

## RESULTS

### Participants' characteristics

Between September 2015 and May 2016, 623 adult MS patients were assessed (Table 1). Of these, 424 (68%) were women, the mean age was 44 years (range 20–78). Most had relapsing-remitting MS (82%), median EDSS score was 2.5 (range 0.0–9.0). General and clinical characteristics of the patients were similar across the centres, except for a lower proportion of relapsing-remitting MS (53%) and a higher EDSS score (median 6.0) in Rome (Table 1), reflecting the case-mix of a rehabilitation centre. Forty-one patients (7%) were excluded from the analyses because of incomplete data. A total of 233 MS patients (Milan n=92, Orbassano n=141) participated in the longitudinal equivalence study.

### Psychometric properties of the eMSQOL-29

Missing replies for the eMSQOL-29 ranged from 0.2% to 5.7% (item 29), and 3 of the 4 'sexual function' items were filtered out by 273 patients (47%). After confirmation of the invariance of the instrument in the two subsamples (online supplementary appendix A), the 'sexual function' subscale score was computed using all the available information (i.e. one item or 4 items, depending on response to the filter question). As expected, respondents who skipped the sexual items were on average older and with a more severe disease (Table 2).

There was no floor effect for any multi-item scale, while a ceiling effect was present for 'physical function', 'sexual function', 'cognitive function', 'bodily pain' and 'health distress'. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.88 to 0.90 (Table 3).

The CFA of the two-factor solution indicated reasonably adequate fit (RMSEA 0.055; CFI 0.99; SRMR 0.035) and outperformed the one-factor solution (Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square test [1] 14.25; p<0.0001). MHC and PHC scores were derived by analogy with those of the MSQOL-54 as weighted sums of the corresponding subscales (Table 4).

Correlations between eMSQOL-29 and FAMS subscales addressing similar domains ranged from 0.62 to 0.86, except for 'social function' (0.38; p<0.001). Correlation between 'emotional wellbeing' and HADS subscales was -0.59 for Anxiety (p<0.0001), and -0.56 for Depression (p<0.0001). Correlation between 'cognitive function' and SDMT was poor (0.25; p<0.0001). Finally, 'overall quality of life' correlated highly with the EQ-5D VAS (0.66; p<0.0001), than with the EQ-5D-3L index (0.48; p<0.0001; table 5).

Radar plot of MSQOL-29 scale/subscale scores by EDSS score (cut-off value 4.5) is reported in Figure 1. A large effect size (Cohen's d > 0.80) was found for 'physical function', 'overall quality of life', 'energy', 'social function', and for both composite scales. Radar plots of MSQOL-29 scale/subscale scores by HADS Anxiety and Depression scores (cut-off value 8.0) are reported in Figure 2. For HADS Anxiety, a large effect size was found for 'health distress' and for the mental health composite scale; for HADS Depression, it was found for 'health distress', 'emotional wellbeing', 'energy', 'cognitive function' , 'overall quality of life', 'physical function', and for both composite scales.

**eMSQOL-29 acceptability**

The overall mean rating of the eMSQOL-29 acceptability was 6.9 (SD 1.8), with about 75% of patients (N=426/564) considering it as suitable (VAS score ≥6). There were no significant differences in the evaluation according to the patient clinical and demographic characteristics (i.e. age, education, EDSS, and centre; online supplementary figure). Of 581 patients, 16 (2.8%)

considered the questionnaire as being taxing, 33/579 (5.7%) as boring. None of the patients found the questionnaire difficult to read or complete.

**Equivalence study**

Of the 233 MS patients enrolled, 220 (94%) completed both questionnaire versions, and 13 did not return the paper MSQOL-29. Missing replies for the paper version ranged from 1 (0.5%) to 5 (2%, item 1); for the eMSQOL-29, were from 1 (0.45%) to 12 (5%, item 29).

Eight of the 11 subscales had ICC values ≥0.70 (table 6), with higher values for multi-item subscales (median ICC 0.87, range 0.84–0.95) compared to single-item subscales (median ICC 0.63, range 0.52–0.76). All the effect sizes were <0.20 (range 0.003–0.12; table 6).

Effect sizes and ICCs for the individual 29 items are reported in the online supplementary table 1.

MSQOL-29 version, order and sequence of administration did not affect the subscale scores in the linear mixed model regression analyses (table 7). Finally, 87 (40%) did not express any preference about the version, 2 missed the answer, while the remaining 131 were equally divided between those who preferred the paper (n=65) and eMSQOL-29 (n=66).

**DISCUSSION**

We recently devised an abbreviated version of the MSQOL-54, also available in electronic version (eMSQOL-29) using a combination of factor analysis and Rasch modelling. The conceptualization of the MSQOL-29 is similar to the parent HRQOL scales, the MSQOL-54 and the SF-36: 'physical function', 'cognitive function', 'sexual function' and 'social function' subscales aim to capture the behavioural consequences of the health problem (here MS); 'emotional wellbeing', 'bodily pain', 'energy', 'health distress', 'health perceptions' and 'change in health' aim to reflect more

subjective components of health; and 'overall quality of life' intends to capture overall satisfaction with life and well-being [31].

In the present study we confirmed eMSQOL-29 reliability, validity and factorial structure in a prospective, independent MS patient sample. In addition, we demonstrated eMSQOL-29 acceptability, and equivalence with the paper version.

An unexpected finding was the high proportion of patients (47%) who filtered out the 'sexual function' items, which outnumbered missing items of the parental questionnaire, where the filter question is not present [11]. Acknowledging the worth of addressing sexuality in MS,[10, 29, 30] exploring sexual functioning over a 4-week period can be challenging, especially for the older and more disabled patients (Table 2). In these patients, using a single item (item 24) can be worthwhile. Importantly, by demonstrating the measurement invariance of the 'sexual function' subscale score obtained from item 24 vs. the full set of items (items 24-27), we supported the use of this scale in the proposed adaptive version. However, an MS-specific instrument, such as the Multiple Sclerosis Intimacy and Sexuality Questionnaire-15 can be added to the eMSQOL-29 to explore in more detail sexual functioning [32] in MS patients.

Concerning missing items, the last eMSQOL-29 item (item 29, 'overall quality of life') had 5% of missing replies (vs. no missing replies in the paper version). Item 29 is the only item in which response is obtained by moving the mouse along a VAS, which can be demanding to patients with tremor or impaired arm function.

Concurrent validity, assessed using various instruments, was acceptable, the only two exceptions being the suboptimal correlations between 'social function' and FAMS 'family/social wellbeing', and between 'cognitive function' and SDMT. Concerning the social function domain, this can originate from differences in item contents between the questionnaires: MSQOL-29 'social function' referring to social activities with family, friends, and social relations; by contrast, FAMS

‘family/social wellbeing’ focuses on social activities within the family. To better appraise the reason for the low correlation between MSQOL-29 ‘cognitive function’ and SDMT ($r=0.25$; $p<0.0001$), we assessed the correlation between FAMS ‘thinking/fatigue’ and SDMT, which was also low ($r=0.24$; $p<0.0001$). This finding indicates that the most used screening measure of MS cognitive compromise little correlated with patient self-perceived impact of cognitive problems on daily functioning. Poor correlations between subjective and objective measures of cognitive impairment have been reported also elsewhere [33,34]. As expected, the EDSS differentiated well MSQOL-29 subscale scores, chiefly the ‘physical function’ (Figure 1), and depressive symptoms differentiated most subscales, and both composite scales (Figure 2).

The equivalence between the eMSQOL-29 and the paper version was good, with ICC values >0.70 in eight of the 11 subscales, and negligible effect sizes, supporting comparison and pooled analysis of data obtained from the two modes of administration [35].

Study limitations

Power calculation was made only for the equivalence study. However, the size of our clinical validation sample was quite large, and the sample well-varied in terms of disease severity, duration, and socio-demographic characteristics.

Another limitation is that usability and pilot testing were not enough meticulous. Thanks to the study findings, refinements will be made to the eMSQOL-29 to improve its usability by patients with impaired arm function. Specifically, a picker wheel widget will be used to rate the VAS; after rating, an automated feedback message will appear, reporting the selected VAS score; and an alerting message (in case of missing rating) to prevent inadvertent missing replies. These refinements are minor modifications that do not alter the content, meaning, or interpretation at

the item or scale level, and will not require any formal validation besides cognitive debriefing and usability testing [14, 15].

To conclude, the eMSQOL-29 (with integrated scoring routine) has good psychometric properties and is equivalent to the paper version. The good level of agreement between electronic and paper versions should be reassuring to investigators, authorities and sponsors using electronic devices to collect PRO data, having implications for the use of electronic measures [15]. Both versions can be easily used at the international level in clinical practice and research. Work needs to be carried out within a longitudinal design to assess instrument's responsiveness - the ability to detect change over time in the construct to be measured [36], and response shift - where the meaning of scores changes over time as patients adapt to their illness [37]. For this reason, it is premature to recommend use of the MSQOL-29 as an outcome measure in clinical trials. However, its conceptual and methodological strengths, combined with the good psychometric properties here described suggest that eMSQOL-29 may have a place among the MS-specific HRQOL instruments. Further, questionnaire brevity limits compilation burden, real-time scoring prevents scoring burden and errors, and supports use during the consultation to promote shared decision making and patient-centred care [38].

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

None.


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**Table 1.** Characteristics of participants (N=623) by centre.

| Characteristic | Milan (n=100) | Orbassano (n=147) | Catania (n=166) | Rome (n=110) | Chieti (n=100) | Total (n=623) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women[1] | 66 (66.0) | 94 (63.9) | 120 (72.3) | 78 (70.9) | 66 (66.0) | 424 (68.1) |
| Age (years)[2] | 39.2, 9.4 (22-59) | 46.9, 12.2 (21-77) | 42.0, 10.6 (20-69) | 51.8, 11.2 (28-78) | 40.9, 9.0 (22-61) | 44.3, 11.5 (20-78) |
| Education[1]: Primary | 21 (21.0) | 36 (24.5) | 29 (17.5) | 15 (13.6) | 19 (19.0) | 120 (19.3) |
| Secondary | 41 (41.0) | 75 (51.0) | 93 (56.0) | 44 (40.0) | 53 (53.0) | 306 (49.1) |
| College/University | 38 (38.0) | 36 (24.5) | 44 (26.5) | 51 (46.4) | 28 (28.0) | 197 (31.6) |
| Married (vs. not-married) | 55 (55.0) | 95 (64.6) | 116 (69.9) | 65 (59.1) | 61 (61.0) | 392 (62.9) |
| Years from MS diagnosis[3,*] | 7 (1-31) | 11 (1-47) | 7 (1-32) | 18 (1-42) | 7 (1-26) | 10 (1-47) |
| Disease course[&]: RR | 90 (95.7) | 120 (81.6) | 143 (87.2) | 58 (52.7) | 87 (14.4) | 498 (82.2) |
| PP | 1 ( 1.1) | 11 (7.5) | 7 (4.3) | 7 (6.4) | 3 (3.3) | 29 (4.8) |
| SP | 3 ( 3.2) | 16 (10.9) | 14 (8.5) | 45 (40.9) | 1 (1.1) | 79 (13.0) |
| EDSS score[3,*] | 1.5 (0.0-8.0) | 2.0 (0.0-7.5) | 2.0 (0.0-7.0) | 6.0 (1.0-9.0) | 2.5 (0.0-6.5) | 2.5 (0.0-9.0) |
| SDMT score[2,*] | 51.0, 14.2 (17.0-93.0) | 44.5, 14.7 (0.0-84.0) | 50.3, 11.2 (19.0-71.0) | 32.5, 15.1 (1.0-68.0) | 56.4, 10.7 (28.0-81.0) | 46.7, 15.3 (0.0-93.0) |
| HADS-Anxiety score[2,^] | 7.0, 4.1 (0.0-17.0) | 6.5, 4.1 (0.0-19.0) | 4.5, 3.4 (0.0-11.0) | 6.0, 4.2 (0.0-18.0) | 6.7, 3.8 (0.0-14.0) | 6.0, 4.0 (0.0-19.0) |
| HADS-Depression score[2,^] | 4.2, 3.8 (0.0-19.0) | 3.9, 3.3 (0.0-15.0) | 3.8, 3.8 (0.0-13.0) | 4.1, 3.8 (0.0-16.0) | 5.4, 4.2 (0.0-18.0) | 4.2, 3.8 (0.0-19.0) |
| FAMS total score[2,°] | 131.3, 29.3 (37-176) | 126.8, 25.4 (49-169) | 126.5, 26.2 (49-169) | 113.5, 27.0 (45-163) | 128.0, 24.2 (77-174) | 125.3, 26.9 (37-176) |
| EQ-5D-3L score[2,°] | 0.9, 0.1 (0.0-1.00) | 0.8, 0.2 (-0.1-1.00) | 0.9, 0.1 (0.7-1.00) | 0.7, 0.3 (-0.4-1.00) | 0.9, 0.1 (0.3-1.00) | 0.8, 0.2 (-0.4-1.00) |
| EQ-VAS[2] | 73.6, 16.6 (30-100) | 71.0, 18.8 (0-100) | 69.7, 16.3 (30-100) | 61.5, 22.7 (0-100) | 74.2, 14.3 (37-100) | 69.9, 18.4 (0-100) |
| Full-set of sexual items[1] | 55 (55.0) | 76 (51.7) | 116 (69.9) | 19 (17.3) | 65 (65.0) | 331 (53.1) |

[1]Number (%); [2]Mean, standard deviation (min-max); [3]Median (min-max); *Valid cases N=606; ^Valid cases N=614; °Valid cases N=620; [&]Valid cases N=606.

EDSS, Expanded Disability Status Scale; EQ-5D-3L, European Quality of life Five Dimensions-3L; MS, FAMS; Functional Assessment of Multiple Sclerosis; HADS, Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale; Multiple Sclerosis; RR, Relapsing Remitting; PP, Primary Progressive; SDMT, Symbol Digit Modality Test; SP, Secondary progressive; VAS, Visual Analogue Scale

**Table 2.** Patient characteristics by response to the filter question on sexual activity.

| Characteristic | Full-set of sexual items (N=309) | Single sexual item (N=273) | Total (N=582) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women[1] | 214 (69.3) | 182 (66.7) | 396 (68.0) |
| Age (years)[2] | 41.1, 9.9 (21-78) | 47.7, 12.4 (21-77) | 44.2, 11.6 (21-78) |
| Education[1] | | | |
| Primary | 47 (15.2) | 68 (24.9) | 115 (19.8) |
| Secondary | 164 (53.1) | 120 (44.0) | 284 (48.8) |
| College/University | 98 (31.7) | 85 (31.1) | 183 (31.4) |
| Married (vs. not-married) | 209 (67.6) | 152 (55.7) | 361 (62.0) |
| Years from MS diagnosis[3,*] | 7 (1–34) | 12 (1-47) | 10 (1–47) |
| EDSS score[3,*] | 2 (0-7.5) | 3.5 (0-9) | 2 (0–9) |
| SDMT score[2,*] | 51.4, 12.8 (0–93) | 41.1, 16.2 (0–83) | 46.6, 15.3 (0–93) |
| HADS Anxiety score[2,^] | 5.2, 3.8 (0–17) | 6.9, 4.1 (0–19) | 6.0, 4.0 (0–19) |
| HADS Depression score[2,^] | 3.3, 3.3 (0–14) | 5.0, 3.8 (0–16) | 4.1, 3.7 (0–16) |
| FAMS total score[2,°] | 134.3, 23.0 (56–176) | 115.9, 27.4 (45–174) | 125.7, 26.7 (45–176) |
| EQ-5D-3L score[2,°] | 0.9, 0.1 (-0.1–1.0) | 0.8, 0.2 (-0.4–1.0) | 0.8, 0.2 (-0.04–1.0) |
| MS Centre (%): Milan | 52 (16.8) | 40 (14.7) | 92 (15.8) |
| Orbassano | 75 (24.3) | 66 (24.2) | 141 (24.2) |
| Catania | 111 (35.9) | 48 (17.6) | 159 (27.3) |
| Rome | 18 ( 5.8) | 89 (32.6) | 107 (18.4) |
| Chieti | 53 (17.2) | 30 (11.0) | 83 (14.3) |

[1] Number (%); [2] Mean, standard deviation (min-max); [3] Median (min-max)

EDSS, Expanded Disability Status Scale; EQ-5D-3L, European Quality of life Five Dimensions-3L FAMS, Functional Assessment of Multiple Sclerosis; HADS, Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale; MS, Multiple sclerosis; SDMT, Symbol Digit Modality Scale.

**Table 3**. Summary statistics of the MSQOL-29 subscale scores.

| Subscale | Valid cases | Mean (SD) | Q1 | Q3 | Cronbach's alpha | Percentage of patients scoring min/max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical function | 582 | 66.8 (35.7) | 41.7 | 100 | 0.89 | 9.8/36.8 |
| Bodily pain | 582 | 76.6 (25.1) | 60.0 | 100 | 0.89 | 0.5/36.9 |
| Emotional wellbeing | 581 | 65.0 (18.8) | 53.3 | 76.7 | 0.88 | 0.2/ 2.8 |
| Energy | 581 | 52.0 (20.6) | 41.7 | 66.7 | 0.88 | 1.2/ 1.0 |
| Cognitive function | 582 | 67.8 (22.7) | 53.3 | 85.0 | 0.89 | 0.2/12.9 |
| Health distress | 581 | 74.5 (23.0) | 60.0 | 93.3 | 0.88 | 1.2/20.3 |
| Sexual function | 581 | 79.5 (29.6) | 66.7 | 100 | 0.89 | 5.5/54.7 |
| Sexual function[§] | 309 | 88.0 (19.6) | 83.4 | 100 | 0.90 | 0.3/59.2 |
| Health perceptions | 581 | 48.8 (30.7) | 33.3 | 66.7 | - | 18.9/10.8 |
| Social function | 579 | 63.5 (27.4) | 50.0 | 75.0 | - | 4.2/22.1 |
| Overall quality of life | 549 | 66.1 (17.3) | 50.0 | 80.0 | - | 0.7/ 0.9 |
| Change in health | 582 | 52.0 (23.7) | 50.0 | 75.0 | - | 4.5/ 9.3 |

* Single item

[§] Values of patients who completed the full-set of the 'sexual function' subscale.

SD, standard deviation; Q1, lower quartile; Q3, upper quartile.

**Table 4.** MSQOL-29 subscale loadings and weights for the Mental (MHC) and Physical (PHC) Health Composite scores obtained from confirmatory factor analysis.

| Subscale | Standardized regression coefficient (loading) | | Weight | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MHC | PHC | MHC | PHC |
| Bodily pain | 0.61 | | 0.14 | |
| Emotional wellbeing | 0.73 | | 0.17 | |
| Cognitive function | 0.60 | | 0.14 | |
| Social function (single item) | 0.74 | | 0.17 | |
| Energy | 0.83 | | 0.19 | |
| Health distress | 0.77 | | 0.18 | |
| Physical function | | 0.70 | | 0.22 |
| Sexual function | | 0.52 | | 0.17 |
| Health perceptions (single item) | | 0.62 | | 0.20 |
| Overall quality of life (single item) | | 0.78 | | 0.25 |
| Change in health (single item) | | 0.51 | | 0.16 |

**Table 5.** Pearson's correlation coefficients of MSQOL-29 and FAMS, HADS, EQ-5D-3L and SDMT scales/subscales. Values for scales/subscales addressing similar constructs are reported in bold. All correlations were statistically significant at p <0.001.

| MSQOL-29 | FAMS | | | | | | HADS | | EQ-5D | | SDMT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Subscale | MO | SY | EWB | GC | TF | FSWB | A | D | Index | VAS | |
| Physical function | **0.86** | 0.43 | 0.58 | 0.51 | 0.55 | 0.24 | -0.26 | -0.45 | 0.62 | 0.60 | 0.56 |
| Bodily pain | 0.48 | **0.66** | 0.41 | 0.31 | 0.44 | 0.20 | -0.40 | -0.36 | 0.44 | 0.42 | 0.22 |
| Emotional wellbeing | 0.42 | 0.37 | **0.62** | 0.58 | 0.45 | 0.39 | **-0.59** | **-0.56** | 0.36 | 0.43 | 0.19 |
| Energy | 0.61 | 0.52 | **0.58** | 0.53 | **0.62** | 0.29 | -0.48 | -0.52 | 0.50 | 0.53 | 0.28 |
| Cognitive function | 0.40 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.45 | **0.75** | 0.35 | -0.41 | -0.51 | 0.26 | 0.40 | **0.25** |
| Health distress | 0.57 | 0.46 | **0.69** | 0.59 | 0.50 | 0.36 | -0.56 | -0.53 | 0.43 | 0.47 | 0.29 |
| Sexual function | 0.41 | 0.28 | 0.43 | 0.37 | 0.44 | 0.23 | -0.35 | -0.40 | 0.31 | 0.31 | 0.25 |
| Health perceptions | 0.48 | 0.35 | 0.48 | 0.39 | 0.43 | 0.19 | -0.35 | -0.36 | 0.38 | 0.41 | 0.23 |
| Social function | 0.57 | 0.38 | 0.55 | 0.51 | 0.52 | **0.38** | -0.40 | -0.48 | 0.42 | 0.45 | 0.33 |
| Overall quality of life | 0.61 | 0.45 | 0.63 | **0.65** | 0.59 | 0.44 | -0.47 | -0.61 | **0.48** | **0.66** | 0.36 |
| Change in health | 0.44 | 0.36 | 0.39 | 0.33 | 0.40 | 0.16 | -0.21 | -0.31 | 0.33 | 0.45 | 0.24 |

EWB, emotional well-being; EQ-5D, European Quality of life Five Dimensions; FAMS, Functional Assessment of Multiple Sclerosis; FSWB, family social well-being; GC, general contentment; HADS, Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale; MO, mobility; SDMT, Symbol Digit Modalities Test; SY, symptoms; TF, thinking/fatigue; VAS, visual analogue scale

**Table 6.** Distribution of eMSQOL-29 subscale scores, and measures to assess equivalence. CI is confidence interval; ICC is intraclass correlation coefficient; SD is standard deviation.

| | N | Mean (SD) eMSQOL-29 | Mean (95% CI) difference paper-eMSQOL-29 | Effect size (95% CI) paper - eMSQOL-29 | ICC (95% CI) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Multi-item subscales:* | | | | | |
| Physical function | 220 | 74.4 (30.1) | -0.08 (-1.77 – 1.62) | -0.006 (-0.063 – 0.051) | 0.95 (0.94 – 0.96) |
| Bodily pain | 220 | 75.7 (24.3) | 0.29 (-1.90 – 2.48) | 0.018 (-0.072 – 0.107) | 0.87 (0.83 – 0.90) |
| Emotional wellbeing | 219 | 64.1 (19.3) | 0.96 (-0.85 – 2.77) | 0.071 (-0.024 – 0.165) | 0.85 (0.81 – 0.89) |
| Energy | 219 | 51.5 (21.0) | -0.04 -(1.79 – 1.72) | -0.003 (-0.087 – 0.081) | 0.89 (0.85 – 0.91) |
| Cognitive function | 220 | 68.0 (22.4) | 1.23 (-0.71 – 3.18) | 0.084 (-0.001 – 0.170) | 0.88 (0.85 – 0.91) |
| Health distress | 219 | 74.5 (21.2) | 0.84 (-1.32 – 3.00) | 0.052 (-0.044 – 0.148) | 0.85 (0.80 – 0.88) |
| Sexual function | 219 | 78.2 (30.0) | 1.58 (-1.48 – 4.65) | 0.069 (-0.031 – 0.169) | 0.84 (0.79 – 0.87) |
| *Single-item subscales:* | | | | | |
| Health perceptions | 219 | 47.9 (28.0) | 1.52 (-1.79 – 4.84) | 0.061 (-0.055 – 0.177) | 0.62 (0.54 – 0.70) |
| Social function | 219 | 65.3 (27.1) | 1.94 (-1.62 – 5.50) | 0.073 (-0.057 – 0.202) | 0.52 (0.42 – 0.61) |
| Overall quality of life | 208 | 68.9 (17.0) | 1.35 (-0.25 – 2.94) | 0.115 ( 0.022 – 0.208) | 0.77 (0.71 – 0.82) |
| Change in health | 215 | 54.8 (23.8) | 0.58 (-2.20 – 3.37) | 0.028 (-0.086 – 0.142) | 0.63 (0.55 – 0.71) |

**Table 7.** Repeated-measure linear regression models of the 11 eMSQOL-29 subscale scores (dependent variables). Each model includes the following independent variables: version (paper vs. electronic), order (first vs. second administration), sequence (version per order), centre (Milan vs. Orbassano), sex, age, Expanded Disability Status Scale score (≤2.5 vs. >2.5), and disease course (relapsing-remitting vs. primary or secondary progressive).

| Subscale | Version | | Order of administration | | Sequence | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | β (SE) | P value | β (SE) | P value | β (SE) | P value |
| Physical function | -0.01 (0.9) | 0.99 | 0.08(0.9) | 0.92 | 12.50 (10.6) | 0.24 |
| Bodily pain | 0.21 (1.1) | 0.85 | 1.47 (1.1) | 0.19 | 5.23 ( 2.9) | 0.07 |
| Emotional wellbeing | 0.98 (0.9) | 0.29 | -1.05 (0.9) | 0.25 | 1.26 ( 2.4) | 0.60 |
| Energy | 0.08 (0.9) | 0.92 | -1.69 (0.9) | 0.06 | 1.87 ( 2.5) | 0.46 |
| Cognitive function | 1.34 (1.0) | 0.17 | -1.57 (1.0) | 0.11 | 4.37 ( 2.8) | 0.12 |
| Health distress | 0.66 (1.1) | 0.55 | 0.19 (1.1) | 0.86 | 3.43 ( 2.6) | 0.19 |
| Sexual function | 1.70 (1.5) | 0.27 | -2.77 (1.5) | 0.07 | -0.55 ( 3.5) | 0.88 |
| Health perceptions | 1.43 (1.7) | 0.39 | 1.73 (1.7) | 0.30 | -0.56 ( 3.3) | 0.86 |
| Social function | 1.81 (1.8) | 0.32 | 0.66 (1. 8) | 0.71 | 3.59 ( 3.1) | 0.24 |
| Overall quality of life | 1.47 (0.8) | 0.07 | 0.13 (0.8) | 0.87 | 1.66 ( 2.0) | 0.41 |
| Change in health | 0.65 (1.4) | 0.65 | 0.48 (1.4) | 0.73 | 1.65 ( 2.7) | 0.54 |

All estimates are adjusted for centre (Milan, Orbassano), sex, age, Expanded Disability Status Scale and diagnosis.
SE, standard error.