PORTUGUESE VALIDATION OF THE COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT TOOL

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INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal and communication skills have been considered a core competency in clinical practice and a very important part of quality medical care. In recent decades great attention has been paid to the quality of communication in medicine and many countries have highlighted the importance of assessing the communication skills of physicians (Batalden, 2002; Makoul, 2007).

Research on this field shows that improving communication skills in medical practice is associated with positive outcomes:

- Enhances patient and doctors' satisfaction and empowerment
- Promotes adherence to treatment
- Decreases malpractice complaints, use of health care resources and health care costs

(Litle et al 2001; Stewart et al 2001, 2003)

The **Communication Assessment Tool (CAT)** is an unidimensional instrument that measures patient perceptions of physician performance in the area of interpersonal and communication skills. The original instrument has 15 items using a 5-point *Likert* scale. Fourteen items focus on the physician and one targets the staff. It has high reliability and validity.

The **Aim** of this study was to analyze the construct validity, the convergent validity and the reliability of the Portuguese version of the CAT.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

A sample of 244 adults [162 (66,4%) women; mean age= 33.7±13.5 years], fluent in Portuguese language, completed the preliminary Portuguese version of CAT, referring to their last visit to primary care. Participants also answered three *Likert* scale question to assess satisfaction and adherence.

MEASURES AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was obtained using the AMOS 23 software. Internal consistency was measured by Cronbach's coefficient (α) an continuous variables correlations were performed using Pearson correlation coefficients, using SPSS v.23 software.

RESULTS

1.1 CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

The CFA showed a good fit for the unidimensional model (Table 1)

χ^2 /df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	p
2.532	.962	.952	.0796	<.01

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis – adjustment indices

1.2 RELIABILITY

Overall scale reliability was high, presenting excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha=0.96)

1.3 CONVERGENT VALIDITY

Pearson correlations with PPPC-16 total and dimensional (Empathy and Active patient involvement) were high (r>.650); with **satisfaction** (r=.385) and **adherence** (r=.279) were moderate (all p<.01)

CONCLUSIONS

- Communication in medicine is considered a fundamental clinical skill to establish a relationship with the patient, paving the way to a successful diagnosis and treatment.

- The Portuguese version of CAT is a reliable and valid instrument to assess patient perception of physician's communication and interpersonal skills.

- In this Portuguese community sample the CAT score was lower than those of the original (American) scale, which indicates that clinical communication skills should improve in our country.

- We intend to use this instrument in research projects for this purpose.

Table 2: CAT Items internal validity

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. Greeted me in a way that made me feel comfortable	.711	.959
2. Treated me with respect	.796	.957
3. Showed interest in my ideas about my health	.816	.956
4. Understood my main health concerns	.811	.957
5. Paid attention to me (looked at me, listened carefully)	.826	.956
6. Let me talk without interruptions	.723	.958
7. Gave me as much information as I wanted	.815	.956
8. Talked in terms I could understand	.705	.959
9. Checked to be sure I understood everything	.804	.957
10. Encouraged me to ask questions	.742	.958
11. Involved me in decisions as much as I wanted	.802	.957
12. Discussed next steps, including any follow-up plans	.799	.957
13. Showed care and concern	.833	.956
14. Spent right amount of time with me	.756	.958

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