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1 **Title**

2 The validity of instruments to measure knowledge in population-based cancer screening targeting
3 individuals at average risk – a systematic review

4
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18

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25 **Abbreviations**

26 COnsensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement Instruments (COSMIN)

27 Patient reported outcome measure (PROM)

28 Informed Choice in Mammography Screening Questionnaire (IMQ)

29 Colorectal cancer screening (CRC)

30 Colorectal Cancer Screening Decision Quality Instrument (CRC-DQI)

31 HPV Testing Knowledge Scale (HTKS)

32 Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC)

33 Item response theory (IRT)

34 **Abstract**

35 Objectives: Relevant knowledge is essential for informed choices about (non)participation in
36 population-based cancer screening. Many instruments have been proposed to assess residents'
37 knowledge about cancer screening programmes but their measurement properties are unknown.
38 This systematic review aims to identify and critically evaluate the measurement properties of
39 instruments to measure knowledge about cancer screening in individuals eligible for population-
40 based screening.

41 Methods: A literature search was undertaken in PubMed, PsycINFO, Embase, CINAHL, Scopus
42 and Web of Science in August 2023. The review included any study reporting one or more
43 measurement properties of the questionnaire or sub-scale used measuring knowledge of cancer
44 screening including breast, colorectal and/or cervical cancer screening. Studies including males
45 aged 45 or older and females aged 20 or older were included. Two independent reviewers screened
46 the articles and assessed the included articles using the COnsensus-based Standards for the selection
47 of health Measurement Instruments (COSMIN).

48 Results: We included 24 instruments, which varied in number and characteristics of items. All
49 instruments were assessed as having an inadequate instrument development. The results of the
50 measurement properties, structural validity, internal consistency and reliability were assessed as
51 indeterminate, while construct validity and responsiveness were sufficient.

52 Conclusion: This systematic review identified no instruments to measure knowledge about cancer
53 screening where the measurement properties were sufficiently evaluated. There is a lack of focus
54 on content validity, and further validation of the instruments is needed. The results indicate a lack of
55 shared understanding or agreement of what constitutes relevant knowledge about cancer screening.

56

57 **Keywords:** Systematic review, population-based cancer screening, knowledge, measurement
58 properties, instrument

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79 **Introduction**

80 Many instruments have been proposed to assess residents' knowledge about participation in cancer
81 screening programmes, but their measurement properties are poorly elucidated. This impedes
82 consistent use of instruments, making it challenging to conduct evidence synthesis and meta-
83 analysis about effective interventions and programmes.

84 In recent years there has been an increased focus on the importance of ensuring that residents make
85 informed choices about participation in population-based cancer screening (Ghanouni et al., 2016).

86 An informed choice is defined as '*one that is based on relevant knowledge, consistent with the*
87 *decision-maker's values and behaviourally implemented*' (Marteau et al., 2001). Thus, obtaining
88 relevant knowledge is central for an informed choice.

89 It is usually expected that residents make the decision about whether or not to participate in cancer
90 screening without consulting health care professionals. Therefore, it is essential to have

91 comprehensible and useful self-administered information materials, which can contribute to
92 knowledge about cancer screening and support individuals to make informed decisions about
93 participation or not (European Colorectal Cancer Screening Guidelines Working Group:

94 von Karsa et al., 2013). Several studies have developed and evaluated interventions, which aim to
95 improve informed choice and residents' knowledge about cancer screening (Gabel et al., 2020a;
96 Gabel et al., 2020b; Hersch et al., 2015; Larsen et al., 2021; Mathieu et al., 2007; Mathieu et al.,
97 2010; Reder and Kolip, 2017; Roberto et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2010; Trevena et al., 2008).

98 However, these studies lack standardized instruments for assessing knowledge related to cancer
99 (Ghanouni et al., 2016). This is problematic in terms of the validity of reported findings.

100 Furthermore, it hampers comparison of results across patient populations making it more difficult to
101 make general recommendation on requirements for informed choice.

102 It can be difficult and time consuming to choose the most appropriate measurement instrument, and
103 biased inferences may be drawn if the chosen instrument does not measure the construct of interest,
104 or if the instrument used has not been validated in the target population in which the investigation is
105 conducted (Mokkink et al., 2006; Terwee et al., 2007). The best method to assess the validity of
106 instruments is through a systematic review that appraises the instruments' measurement properties
107 according to key criteria such as the COSMIN guideline for patient reported outcome measures
108 (Scholtes et al., 2011; Terwee et al., 2007).

109 This systematic review aims to identify and critically appraise the measurement properties of
110 instruments measuring knowledge about cancer screening in individuals eligible for population-
111 based screening.

112

113 **Methods**

114 This systematic review adheres to the COSMIN methodology for systematic reviews of Patient-
115 Reported Outcome Measures (Mokkink, 2018; Terwee, 2018). To evaluate the methodological
116 quality of the included studies, the COSMIN Risk of Bias Checklist was used, and measurement
117 properties of the instruments were evaluated using the COSMIN criteria (Prinsen et al., 2018;
118 Terwee et al., 2007). The protocol was registered in PROSPERO (registration number:
119 CRD42021289395).

120

121 *Search strategy*

122 The search was developed and conducted in collaboration with an experienced medical librarian
123 (LS). A comprehensive literature search was performed using six different bibliographic databases:
124 PubMed, Embase, PsychInfo, CINAHL, Scopus and Web of Science (complete search strategies are
125 shown in Appendix A). The search period spanned from the inception of each database until
126 November 19th 2021 and was updated on August 2nd 2023 to ensure that subsequent relevant
127 studies were included. The search was customized for each database using both controlled thesaurus
128 terms and natural language terms for synonyms (Appendix A). The validated COSMIN search filter
129 on measurement properties developed for PubMed (Terwee et al., 2009) was used with minor
130 adjustments such as new MeSH-terms, field codes etc. and adapted accordingly to the other
131 databases. A follow-up search of references cited in included studies was conducted.

132

133 *Eligibility criteria*

134 The review included any study reporting one or more measurement properties of instruments or
135 sub-scales used for measuring cancer screening knowledge of individuals eligible for population-
136 based cancer screening for breast, colorectal and/or cervical cancer. However, studies were
137 excluded if the development process could not be assessed. According to the European Union, the
138 relevant populations include males aged 45 or older and females aged 20 or older (Council of the
139 European Union, 2022; European Commission et al., 2008; European Commission et al., 2013;
140 European Commission et al., 2010). Studies covering this age range were included even if they also

141 included younger and/or older individuals. Experimental and quasi-experimental study designs and
142 observational studies were included if the study reported measurement properties of the instrument
143 or sub-scale used to measure knowledge about cancer screening. After submission of the protocol, a
144 criterion was added to exclude studies outside Europe, North America and Australasia these studies
145 could be less comparable to studies in Europe, North America and Australasia. Studies were also
146 excluded if there were no separate scores for the level of knowledge about cancer screening (Table
147 1).

148

149 *Study selection*

150 The studies identified from the systematic search were uploaded to Covidence Systematic Review
151 Software and duplicates were removed. Initially, the titles and abstracts were screened using the
152 eligibility criteria. Potentially eligible studies were then assessed in full against the eligibility
153 criteria. All assessments were carried out by two independent reviewers (RNS and MBL), and any
154 disagreements between the reviewers were resolved through discussion.

155

156 *Data extraction*

157 First, extraction of characteristics of the included studies was conducted (country, instrument, study
158 design, number of participants, target population, mode of administration, (sub)scale(s) and number
159 of items, response options, language of instrument and measurement properties).

160 Second, data extraction on measurement properties was conducted (content validity including
161 PROM development, structural validity, internal consistency, reliability, criterion validity, construct
162 validity and responsiveness).

163

164 *Risk of Bias: evaluation of measurement properties and quality of evidence*

165 According to COSMIN, the evaluation of each measurement property includes three phases.

166 Initially, the COSMIN Risk of Bias Checklist was applied to assess *methodological quality* of
167 studies. COSMIN Risk of Bias Checklist consists of 10 elements which are assessed in the

168 following order: 1) instrument development, 2) content validity, 3) structural validity, 4) internal
169 consistency, 5) cross-cultural validity, 6) reliability, 7) measurement error, 8) criterion validity, 9)

170 hypothesis testing for construct validity, 10) responsiveness. Each element is rated as very good,
171 adequate, doubtful or inadequate quality. Each element is assessed by evaluating corresponding

172 standards. A standard is rated 'very good' if there is evidence that the quality of the study to which

173 the standard is referring is adequate, 'adequate' if relevant information is not reported in the article
174 but it can be assumed that the quality aspect is adequate, 'doubtful' if it is doubtful whether the
175 quality aspect is adequate and 'inadequate' if the evidence provided for the quality aspect is not
176 adequate. To determine the overall rating for the element, the lowest rating of any standard is
177 chosen (Mokkink, 2018; Terwee, 2018). If there is high quality evidence that content validity
178 including the patient reported outcome measure (PROM) development were inadequate, COSMIN
179 recommends the instruments not to be further assessed (Mokkink, 2018; Prinsen et al., 2018).

180

181 *Evidence of good measurement properties*

182 In the second sub-step, the result of each study on any measurement property should be evaluated in
183 accordance with the revised criteria for good measurement properties. For each of the measurement
184 properties, criteria are listed that the property should meet to be rated as sufficient (+), insufficient
185 (-) or indeterminate (?) (Mokkink, 2018). To assess construct validity and responsiveness of the
186 included instruments, hypotheses based on the intervention and results were formulated by the
187 review team:

- 188 1. Participants in the intervention group would exhibit greater knowledge of cancer screening
189 than those in the control group.
- 190 2. Knowledge level increased significantly between pre-test and post-test.
- 191 3. A correlation between two cognitive measures is expected so that one increases if another
192 does and vice versa.

193

194 *Confidence in the data*

195 Finally, the third sub-step includes summarising the evidence and grading the quality of evidence
196 using the modified GRADE approach (Mokkink, 2018; Terwee, 2018). This step could not be
197 performed since there was not enough evidence to summarise and grade any of the instruments.
198 The quality assessment was performed by two reviewers independently (RNS and MBL) and the
199 final results were determined through consensus process.

200

201 **Results**

202 *Study selection*

203 The search strategy identified 7915 studies from the databases and 10 studies from searching
204 selected reference lists. After removing duplicates, 5327 studies were screened by title and abstract.
205 Of the remaining 370 studies, 38 were excluded as they could not be retrieved. Thus, 332 studies
206 were assessed for eligibility by reading full text, and 303 were excluded mainly due to being outside
207 Europe, North America or Australasia, no measurement properties were reported or the study did
208 not report a measure of residents' knowledge of cancer screening (a list of these studies are found in
209 Appendix B). Forty-three studies were excluded because the study only reported construct validity
210 (without further description of the development of the instrument), and 16 studies were not
211 evaluated by the COSMIN Risk of Bias Checklist as the studies referred to another study, which
212 was assessed to have inadequate PROM development or content validity and only reported internal
213 consistency or construct validity. Therefore, 25 studies (24 instruments) were included in the
214 systematic review (Figure 1).

215

216 *Study characteristics*

217 In total 17 of the included studies derived from North America. Six studies were conducted in, and
218 one study was conducted in Australia. One study was conducted in United Kingdom, Australia and
219 USA (Table 2).

220 Ten studies used an instrument to measure knowledge about breast cancer screening. Eleven studies
221 were about colorectal cancer screening, and four studies were about cervical cancer screening. Most
222 studies had a randomized controlled trial design, a cross sectional design or a pre-test-post-test
223 design, while only eight studies were designed as actual development and validation studies. The
224 study populations ranged from 40 to 7142 participants, and the ages of the target populations ranged
225 from 18 to 89 years old and thus within the age group for residents eligible for population-based
226 cancer screening (Table 2).

227

228 *Instrument characteristics*

229 Of the 10 studies which examined an instrument to measure knowledge about breast cancer
230 screening, 7 instruments were 'ad hoc' instruments (Chamot and Perneger, 2002; Goel et al., 2011;
231 Hickey et al., 2013; Kagawa-Singer et al., 2009; Price, 1994; Schonberg et al., 2014; van Agt et al.,
232 2012), which means that the instrument was developed and evaluated for the particular study. One
233 study examined the Breast Cancer Knowledge Test developed by McCance et al. (McCance et al.,
234 1990), one study examined a revised version of the Breast Cancer Knowledge Test (Lee et al.,
235 2017) and one the Informed Choice in Mammography Screening Questionnaire (IMQ) (Knowledge
236 index) (Reder et al., 2019). Of the 11 studies examining an instrument about colorectal cancer

237 screening (CRC) knowledge, one study examined the CRC Knowledge, Perception and Screening
238 Survey (Green and Kelly, 2004), another study examined the Colorectal Cancer Knowledge
239 Questionnaire (Weinrich et al., 1992), one examined the knowledge subscale of Colorectal Cancer
240 Screening Decision Quality Instrument (CRC-DQI) (Sepucha et al., 2014), while a fifth study
241 examined the Knowledge Assessment Survey (Sanchez et al., 2013). The remaining seven studies
242 examined *ad hoc* instruments (Table 2). For cervical cancer screening one study examined an *ad*
243 *hoc* instrument (Breitkopf et al., 2005), while one examined the HPV testing knowledge instrument
244 (Waller et al., 2013) and two studies examined the HPV Testing Knowledge Scale (Griffin-
245 Mathieu et al., 2022; Haward et al., 2022).

246

247 The number of items included in the instruments ranged from 3 to 28 items. Most instruments had
248 questions about both the cancer disease in general and the cancer screening test. The commonest
249 reporting response options were 'true, false, don't know', 'correct, incorrect answers, don't know' or
250 'yes and no'. However, some studies did not report response options. Three studies reported the
251 mode of administration to be self-administered (Breitkopf et al., 2005; Chamot and Perneger, 2002;
252 Reder et al., 2019), three were interview-based (Kagawa-Singer et al., 2009; Peterson et al., 2007;
253 Ramírez-Amill et al., 2017), one was reported as telephone survey (Price, 1994) and three by web-
254 based questionnaires (Gabel et al., 2019; Haward et al., 2022; Waller et al., 2013). The remaining
255 studies did not report mode of administration of the instrument. Four studies reported the language
256 of the instrument to be both English and French (Chamot and Perneger, 2002; Griffin-Mathieu et
257 al., 2022; Haward et al., 2022), one study Hmong (China and Southeast Asia) (Kagawa-Singer et
258 al., 2009), one study German and Turkish (Reder et al., 2019), and two studies both English and
259 Spanish (Breitkopf et al., 2005; Sanchez et al., 2013). For the remaining studies the languages were
260 not reported. PROM development, structural validity, internal consistency and construct validity
261 were the most frequently assessed measurement properties (Table 2).

262

263 *COSMIN Risk of Bias assessment*

264 Using the Risk of Bias checklist all the included studies were assessed as having an inadequate
265 PROM development (Table 3) and there was not enough information reported to assess the content
266 validity. In order to provide a more nuanced appraisal of the existing instruments for the
267 measurement of knowledge about cancer screening, we have decided to further assessed all the

268 included studies knowing that COSMIN guidelines do not recommend to further assess instruments
269 with inadequate content validity including PROM development.

270

271 The *ad hoc* instruments for the measurement of knowledge about breast, colorectal and/or cervical
272 cancer included in this systematic review were assessed as having an inadequate PROM
273 development. Several of the *ad hoc* instruments were assessed as having a clear description of the
274 construct to be measured. However, unclear description of the target population for which the
275 instruments were developed, that the instruments were not developed in a sample representing the
276 target population and lack of cognitive interviews or other pilot test led to an inadequate total
277 quality of PROM development. Cognitive interviews or other pilot tests were performed for nine of
278 the 15 *ad hoc* instruments. However, the quality of the comprehensibility or comprehensiveness
279 examinations were doubtful or inadequate. For some of the *ad hoc* instruments internal consistency,
280 reliability, construct validity and/or responsiveness were reported. The Risk of Bias assessment of
281 these measurement properties ranges from very good to inadequate (Table 4). For the instruments
282 where only internal consistency was reported, the measurement property was assessed as doubtful.
283 For most of the *ad hoc* instruments internal consistency data were reported without information
284 about structural validity or unidimensionality. In such cases, COSMIN recommends rating the
285 standard '*was an internal consistency statistic calculated for each unidimensional scale or subscale*
286 *separately?*' as doubtful (D). For most of the instruments where responsiveness was reported, the
287 measurement property was assessed as doubtful or inadequate due to an inappropriate measure of
288 responsiveness (Table 4). To assess the reliability a two-week time interval was considered
289 appropriate. In three of the *ad hoc* instruments reliability was assessed to be inadequate due to
290 inappropriate time intervals (Breitkopf et al., 2005; Price, 1994; Weinrich et al., 1992).

291

292 The Breast Cancer Knowledge Test (McCance et al., 1990) was assessed as having clear description
293 of the construct to be measured, and cognitive interviews were performed and assumable in a
294 sample representing the target population (McCance et al., 1990). However, the instrument was
295 assessed as having inadequate total quality of PROM development due to unclear descriptions of
296 the target population for which the PROM was developed and the PROM was not developed in a
297 sample representing that same target population (Table 3). Structural validity and internal
298 consistency were reported. However due to unclear description of the methods used, the structural
299 validity was assessed as inadequate, while the internal consistency was assessed as very good.

300

301 The Colorectal Cancer Knowledge questionnaire (Weinrich et al., 1992), CRC Knowledge,
302 Perception and Screening Survey (Green and Kelly, 2004) and the CRC Knowledge Assessment
303 Survey (Sanchez et al., 2013) were all assessed as having clear descriptions of the construct to be
304 measured (Table 3). However, the instruments were assessed as having inadequate total quality of
305 PROM development due to unclear descriptions of the target population for which the PROMs were
306 developed and/or the PROMs were not developed in a sample representing those same target
307 populations (Table 3). For these instruments internal consistency was reported and assessed as
308 doubtful due to lack of information about structural validity or unidimensionality.

309

310 The knowledge index of the IMQ (Reder et al., 2019) was assessed as having very good description
311 of the construct to be measured and the population for which the PROM was developed. Despite
312 this, the total quality of PROM design was doubtful due to a doubtful concept elicitation and also
313 description of the origin of construct (Table 3). Pilot testing was performed. However, it was
314 doubtful whether the test was performed in a sample representing the target population, and the
315 comprehensibility and comprehensiveness were not investigated. Structural validity and internal
316 consistency were assessed as very good and construct validity as adequate (Table 4).

317

318 The CRC-DQI Knowledge subscale (Sepucha et al., 2014) was assessed as having clear
319 descriptions of the construct to be measured and the context of use. The study was performed in a
320 sample representing the target population. Cognitive interviews were performed and also assumable
321 in a sample representing the target population. The examination of comprehensibility was assessed
322 as doubtful due to an unclear description of the method and analysis. However, reporting of
323 comprehensiveness and content validity assessment were unclear (Table 3). Reliability and
324 construct validity were assessed as inadequate. (Table 4).

325

326 For the HTKS (Griffin-Mathieu et al., 2022; Haward et al., 2022) the description of the construct to
327 be measured was assessed as very good. Further the origin of the construct and the description of
328 the target population for which the PROM was developed were assessed as very good. However,
329 the PROM development study was not performed in a sample representing the target population for
330 which the PROM was developed. Pilot tests were performed in a sample representing the target
331 population and comprehensibility was assessed. However, the investigation of comprehensibility

332 was assessed as doubtful due to an unclear description of the method and analysis (Table 3).
333 Structural validity and internal validity were assessed as very good, while criterion validity was
334 assessed as inadequate (Table 4).

335
336 The HPV Testing Knowledge scale (Waller et al., 2013) was assessed as having clear descriptions
337 of the construct to be measured (Table 3). However, the instrument was assessed as having
338 inadequate total quality of PROM development due to unclear description of the target population
339 for which the PROM was developed and the PROM was not developed in a sample representing
340 that same target population. Further, there was no information about whether cognitive interviews
341 or other pilot tests were performed (Table 3). Structural validity and internal consistency were
342 assessed as very good, while reliability and construct validity were assessed as doubtful (Table 4).

343
344 *Evidence of good measurement properties*

345 For most of the *ad hoc* instrument the internal consistency was assessed as indeterminate due to
346 lack of information on the structural validity. Reliability was also assessed as indeterminate because
347 of no information about Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) (continuous scores) or weighted
348 kappa (dichotomous scores). Although responsiveness in most of the studies was calculated by
349 using an inappropriate method, the results were in accordance with the hypothesis and therefore the
350 responsiveness was assessed as sufficient. For the instruments of Gabel et al. (Gabel et al., 2019)
351 and Wolf et al. (Wolf et al., 2005), structural validity was assessed as indeterminate due to lack of
352 data about local independence and monotonicity (Table 5).

353
354 For the Breast Cancer Knowledge Test (McCance et al., 1990) structural validity and internal
355 consistency were assessed as indeterminate due to lack of information about structural validity
356 (Table 5).

357
358 The results of the IMQ knowledge index showed indeterminate structural validity and internal
359 consistency, due to a lack of information to assess the criteria of local independence. Further, the
360 results showed sufficient construct validity since the results were in accordance with the hypothesis
361 (Reder et al., 2019) (Table 5).

362

363 The results of the CRC-DQI Knowledge subscale showed insufficient reliability due to an ICC
364 lower than 0.70. Further, the results showed sufficient construct validity since the hypotheses were
365 met (Sepucha et al., 2014) (Table 5).

366

367 The HPV Testing Knowledge Scale showed indeterminate structural validity and internal
368 consistency due to a lack of report of important aspects of the item response theory (IRT) analysis.
369 Further, indeterminate criterion validity was found (Griffin-Mathieu et al., 2022; Haward et al.,
370 2022) (Table 5).

371

372 For the HPV knowledge measure structural validity was assessed as indeterminate due to lack of
373 information about local independence. Therefore, internal consistency was also assessed as
374 indeterminate. Reliability was also assessed as indeterminate because ICC was not reported.
375 Construct validity was also assessed as sufficient because the results were in accordance with the
376 hypothesis (Table 5).

377

378 **Discussion**

379 This is the first systematic review of the measurement properties of instruments measuring
380 knowledge about breast, colorectal or cervical cancer screening using the COSMIN guidelines. We
381 included 25 studies and 24 different instruments. The included instruments varied in number and
382 characteristics of items, and most of the instruments were *ad hoc* instruments developed for each
383 specific study. All included instruments were assessed as having inadequate PROM development,
384 and there was not enough information to assess content validity of the instruments. Nevertheless, all
385 included instruments were further assessed for risk of bias in development and against the updated
386 criteria for good measurement properties. The results of these assessments showed indeterminate
387 structural validity, internal consistency, criterion validity and reliability, while construct validity
388 and responsiveness were assessed as sufficient. The assessments indicated a lack of focus on
389 content validity including PROM development and structural validity.

390

391 COSMIN was developed in 2005 due to a lack of clarity about the terminology and definitions of
392 measurement properties, inconsistency in methods used to determine measurement properties and a
393 lack of explicit and comprehensive criteria for what constitute good measurement properties
394 (Consensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement Instruments (COSMIN))

395 webpage). Without clear standards the evidence-based selection of measurement instruments is
396 strongly hampered (Mokkink et al., 2006). A systematic review conducted in 2006 found
397 heterogeneity in the measures used in studies of informed decision making for prostate, breast and
398 colorectal cancer screening (Mullen et al., 2006), which is consistent with our findings. Mullen et
399 al. 2006 reported that in many cases, the measurement properties of the instruments were either not
400 or minimally reported and the validity of the measures was reported infrequently (Mullen et al.,
401 2006). The instruments included in the systematic review by Mullen et al. (Mullen et al., 2006)
402 were developed before 2005, and the same applies to several of the instruments included in our
403 systematic review. Before the development of COSMIN, only general guidelines were available
404 (Mokkink et al., 2006), which may explain the inconsistent reporting of measurement properties.
405 The COSMIN methodology to evaluate content validity of PROMs was published in 2018 (Terwee
406 et al., 2018), potentially explaining the inadequate development of several of the included
407 instruments before that date. In general, more recent instruments such as IMQ knowledge index,
408 CRC-DQI Knowledge subscale, HPV Testing Knowledge Scale and HPV Knowledge measure
409 accomplish more of the COSMIN criteria.

410

411 Developing a measurement instrument is a challenging and time consuming process (Mokkink et
412 al., 2006). The results of the systematic review indicate that there has been little rigorous
413 development of validated instruments to measure knowledge about cancer screening, despite the
414 intense interest and resources devoted to cancer screening programmes. According to the COSMIN
415 guidelines, this means that study findings are not based on high quality instruments, which affects
416 inferences drawn from trials about improving residents' levels of knowledge about cancer screening.
417 Knowledge about population-based cancer screening is a critical component of informed decision
418 making (Mullen et al., 2006).

419

420 The results of the knowledge subscales included in the instruments of IMQ, CRC-DQI, the HPV
421 Testing Knowledge Scale and the HPV Knowledge measure indicate a foundation for well-
422 developed instruments for the measurement of knowledge related to breast, colorectal and cervical
423 cancer screening, respectively. Nevertheless, to ascertain the effectiveness of information materials,
424 which can support informed choices about participation or not in screening, further assessments of
425 measurement properties of these three instruments are essential in order to validate the instruments
426 and develop them further if required. In addition, the COSMIN guidelines suggest both that

427 literature should be reviewed and that scientific experts and the target population should be
428 involved in developing and testing an instrument, to define and elaborate the instrument's construct,
429 choose the measurement method, select and formulate items and scoring issues. Few studies have
430 investigated what defines relevant knowledge about cancer screening in order to make an informed
431 choice, and the results of these studies demonstrate a lack of consensus on concept (Jepson et al.,
432 2007; Kirkegaard et al., 2016). To conceptualize relevant knowledge about cancer screening it is
433 crucial through qualitative interviews to engage scientific experts within the field and
434 representatives from the target population. Further, the target population should be involved in
435 pilot- and field-testing of the measurement instrument (de Vet et al., 2011). To fulfil these
436 guidelines a content validity study and further evaluation of measurement properties need to be
437 conducted for all three instruments.

438

439 *Strength and limitations*

440 Strengths of this review include its systematic literature search, which was conducted in
441 collaboration with an experienced medical librarian and the application of the validated COSMIN
442 search filter on measurement properties (Terwee et al., 2009). Second, we used the COSMIN
443 criteria to assess methodological quality of the included studies, supporting transparent conclusions.
444 Strict application of the COSMIN guideline would have led to no further assessment of any of the
445 instruments because of inadequate PROM development and inability to assess content validity. We
446 nevertheless extended the assessments to highlight the extent of existing work, identifying which
447 instruments provide a basis for well-developed instruments for the measurement of knowledge
448 related to breast, colorectal and cervical cancer screening.

449

450 This systematic review is limited to studies where the target population is from Europe, North
451 America and Australasia. This eligibility criterion has been chosen to enhance comparability across
452 studies. However, variations may exist depending on the healthcare system and population
453 composition. Further, it only includes colorectal, breast and cervical cancer screening knowledge
454 instruments. Consequently, in both cases we may have excluded potentially high-quality
455 instruments for other screening domains, where instruments to measure knowledge may also be
456 relevant.

457

458 **Conclusion**

459 In total, 24 instruments to measure knowledge about cancer screening were included and assessed
460 using the COSMIN guidelines in this systematic review. In general, the results indicate inadequate
461 focus on content validity including PROM development, which is considered the most important
462 measurement property by COSMIN. Further assessments of content validity and measurement
463 properties need to be conducted.

464

465 **Co-author contributions**

466 **Louise Stenholt:** Literature search, reviewing and editing. **Henrik Hein Lauridsen:** Methodology,
467 reviewing and editing. **Adrian Edwards:** Conceptualization, methodology, reviewing and editing.
468 **Berit Andersen:** Conceptualization, methodology, reviewing and editing. **Mette Bach Larsen:**
469 Conceptualization, formal analysis, review and editing.

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475 **Declaration of interest**

476 The authors declare no conflict of interest.

477

478 **Appendix A – Literature search**

479 Information associated with the literature search can be found in appendix A.

480

481 **Appendix B – excluded studies**

482 The excluded studies can be found in Appendix B.

483

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