



Why is Scientific Validity Important?

White Paper Series by Wellspring®

Why is Scientific Validity Important?

Validity refers to the degree to which a study or questionnaire accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Often, a questionnaire is tested for validity by comparing a new questionnaire with one that is established and recognized as valid or correct.

Wellspring published the first personal wellness profile in the United States in 1979 and has since become acknowledged as a leader in wellness assessment. In 2011 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) invited Wellspring to assist in developing content for a health risk assessment (HRA) to be used by Medicare.



Brown, SC et al. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*. 2008. Reliability and Validity of the Personal Wellness Profile™ (PWP) Questionnaire in African American College Women. <http://tinyurl.com/h3f9dzg>

Researchers using the Wellspring® Health Risk Assessment have conducted validity evaluations.

In 2008, the Graduate Nursing Program at Southern University School of Nursing conducted a reliability and validity assessment of the Wellspring HRA. They published this research in the *Journal of Cultural Diversity* 2008; 15(4):163-7.

Their findings stated, “The HRA has moderate to moderately high internal consistency as a whole ($r=0.77$), and that the subscale scores were also reliable over time.”

They concluded, “The HRA will be valuable as a valid, standardized, highly portable tool that can be taken into the community and administered to African-American and other populations who do not readily have access to treatment, research, and healthcare centers.”

The HRA has been used in a variety of other research projects over the years. A complete list is available showing 66 such research projects that have been published since 2008.

The HRA was also extensively evaluated by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in 2008 and was determined to be a valid tool for use in wellness assessment and education programs delivered by hospitals, clinics, corporations, and other healthcare settings. The PWP is currently certified by the NCQA as a valid and effective tool for use in wellness programs.

Why is Scientific Validity Important?

Content for Evaluating Wellness

Defining the concept of wellness is challenging because it encompasses the whole person – including physical, mental, and social health components. Because of this diversity, Wellsource has chosen to draw its content for evaluating health and wellness from a variety of well-recognized health organizations and large-population studies.

One of the first large studies utilized was the **Alameda County Good Health Practices study**¹ which included nearly 7,000 people, followed now for over 20 years. Results have been published in the journal *Preventive Medicine* numerous times. The study identified seven lifestyle practices strongly related to a longer life. Wellsource took these seven principles as the core of our early HRA assessment tool.

Over the years numerous other studies have contributed key information to identifying population groups that are healthy and live longer or that have less chronic disease (heart disease, cancer, diabetes, etc.). Examples include the **Framingham Heart Study**², now going over 30 years and published numerous times in *Circulation*, the American Heart Association journal. More recently, two studies by Harvard – the **Nurses' Health Study**³ and the **Health Professionals Follow-up Study**⁴ (including over 120,000 people and continuing for nearly 30 years) – have provided rich results for identifying people of low and high risk for diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and longevity.

Health standards and resources accessed for current recommendations for the Wellsource HRA

- American College of Sports Medicine. *Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription*.
- American College of Cardiology.
- American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM).
- American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM).
- American Diabetes Association. Standards of Care in Diabetes. <http://tinyurl.com/znxclb6>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). <http://tinyurl.com/gu9o93w>
- Institute of Medicine (IOM). Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs). <http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/interactiveDRI>
- National Cancer Institute.
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) guidelines for heart health (Adult Treatment Panel III (ATP III) Guidelines). <http://tinyurl.com/jnodgbh>
- National Institute of Health (NIH). Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure. <http://tinyurl.com/jzvvtj6>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans <https://health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- United States Preventive Services Task Force.

Why is Scientific Validity Important?

Key journals reviewed monthly for current health recommendations:

- *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.
- *Harvard Health Letter*.
- *Health and Nutrition Letter*. Tufts.
- *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.
- *JAMA Internal Medicine*.
- *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. ACSM.
- *Nutrition Action Health Letter*. Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Wellspring has a long-established process of continually improving our family of HRAs. We endeavor to stay current with the recommendations and literature of the health science community.

For more information, please contact us at well@wellspring.com or 800.533.9355

1. Housman, J et al. (September–October 2005). “The Alameda County Study: A Systematic, Chronological Review” (PDF). *American Journal of Health Education*. Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. 36 (5): 302–308. doi:10.1080/19325037.2005.10608200. ISSN 1055-6699. ERIC document number EJ792845. Retrieved 7 June 2010.
2. *Circulation*. Framingham Heart Study. <https://www.framinghamheartstudy.org/>
3. *Harvard School of Public Health Nurses’ Health Study* <http://www.nurseshealthstudy.org/>
4. *Harvard School of Public Health. Health Professionals Follow-up Study*. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hpfs/>