Reviewer's report

Title: Neuropsychiatric symptoms in patients with dementia in primary care: a study protocol

Version: 3
Date: 22 October 2013

Reviewer: Kirsten Moore

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity of re-reviewing this paper. Overall, the standard of the paper has been substantially improved.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. My main concern is still relating to the overall aims and hypothesis of the paper. In the abstract the aim is purely to investigate the course of NPS and caregiver distress. In the body of the paper there are two aims – the one just described as well as a second aim to detect the determinants of the course of NPS and caregiver distress. However, the hypothesis suggests that specialised services will impact on NPS and caregiver distress over time. In the method you then describe how ‘CONCERN’ will be implemented in 14 out of 18 participating clinics. If you are introducing an intervention, isn’t the study really an evaluation of the CONCERN program and more of an intervention study than a pure observational study? Whilst not a randomised controlled trial, it involves an invention that is expected to influence outcomes and these will be compared to patients from four ‘control’ clinics that do not implement CONCERN.

2. I also think that given the study is about an intervention that aims to reduce NPS, there should be more background about existing research that has aimed to reduce NPS in community dwelling populations. There has been a number of studies that have aimed to do this, mainly through education with caregivers.

Minor Essential Revisions
3. Acronyms should be spelt out in full the first time they are presented.

Discretionary Revisions
4. I am curious as to how this study would not require ethical review given the involvement of patients and caregivers completing assessments. Can you add a statement as to why it did not require ethical review?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.