Reviewer's report

Title: Discomfort and agitation in older adults with dementia

Version: 2 Date: 14 June 2007

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Page 1: Capitalize “Psychology”.
Page 3, para 1, line 2: The minimum clinically important difference between the discomfort and aggressive behaviour should be modeled and the power to detect what that is should be articulated.
Page 4, Background: The literature review is not supported by a method or search strategy.
Page 7, Methods, Participants, para 1, line 3: Replace “on average” by “a mean of”.
Page 7, Methods, Participants, para 2, last line: The sample size has not been properly justified.
Page 8, Severity of dementia, last sentence: How good are the interrater reliability and validity? The measures should be provided in a numerical estimate of these, and not forcing a reviewer to look up these estimates. The reliability of the study in the hands of the nurses should be reported.
Page 8, Disability, last sentence: The scale’s validity and reliability are claimed to have been demonstrated but should be summarized here. Also the reliability of the nurses to administer this disability test is crucial to making sense of these data.
Page 8, Agitation, line 4: Replace “ranges” by “varies”.
Page 9, para 1, last sentence: The French version of the CMAI has been found to be both valid and reliable but, again, the numbers should be stated with a description of the method. How good are these in the hands of the nurses?
Page 10, para 1: Similarly here for the discomfort—the psychometric properties of the scale should be summarized with appropriate measures, and how good the reliability is of the nurses used to do these measurements needs to be provided. Just quoting that it is reliable in other people’s hands is not good enough, in the view of this reviewer.
Page 11, Results, para 1, line 1: The computer and operating system should also be listed.
Page 11, Results, para 2, last line: It is conventional to report a mean to one decimal place, so “(-15)” should be “(-15.5)” should be recorded here.
Page 11, Results, para 3: The power to detect a clinically important correlation should be stated here.
Page 12, para 1, line 4: The right closing bracket of “(deltaR2)” should be dropped to the main line level and not as part of the superscript.
Page 12, para 1, line 7: Insert “estimated” between “The” and “beta”.
Page 12, para 1, line 12: Insert “estimated” between “Further,” and “standardized”.
Page 12, Discussion, para 1, last line: For the relationship to be “weak” there should be implications of a power discussion.
Page 13, para 1, last line: Drop “in order” in front of “to” as these words are redundant in English.
Page 14 needs a major rewrite:

• para 1, line 1: “average” should be replaced by “mean” and, at the end of the line, “average” should be replaced by “the mean”.
• para 1, line 3: “an average” should be replaced by “a mean”.
• para 1, line 5: “range” should be replaced by “minimum and maximum”.
• para 1, line 6: The dash between “(0 – 14)” should be replaced by “to”.
Page 14, para 2, line 5: Replace “range” by “vary”.
Page 14, para 2, last line: Replace “range” by “min and max”.
Page 16, References: This reviewer did not check the references for accuracy.
Page 20, Table 1: In the table headings, “Range” should be replaced by “Min-Max”. The summary statistics should be reported to one more decimal place than the original data, not to two. The percentage symbols do not need to be listed in the second column because “Percentage” is the label for the column.
Tables 3, 4 and 5 should all have “(n.s.)” replaced by a p-value at the bottom of the first step, and all of
these tables could be combined into one table rather than three separate ones.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.