Author's response to reviews

Title: Perceived wellbeing of patients one year post stroke in general practice - Recommendations for quality aftercare

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Sir / Madam,

We again would like to submit the attached revised manuscript, "Perceived wellbeing of patients one year post stroke in general practice - Recommendations for quality aftercare," for reconsideration for possible publication in the BMC Neurology.

We highlighted with red underlines all changes made when revising the manuscript.

In the following text a point-by-point response to the concerns of the reviewers is given.

Reviewer: Jorunn Drageset

1) Below are some very minor issues wording/typo issues:
   Section Patients and methods p 6, 1. paragraph last sentence change to:
   “The MEC (medical ethicalcommittees) of the Martini Hospital has approved this study (17-01-2008)”.  
P 6 last sentence change to:”Patients were interviewed in person by a trained medical practitioner and standardized questionnaires were administered”
   Section Results p 9. The response rate was 57 (see Figure 1). Include the percent.
   Second paragraph in the same section: The mean age of the study population was 77. Include years.
   Last sentence “A quarter of the patients had a history of having had a TIA/stroke and a quarter had had ischemic” Remove had.
   Tables Table 1. Change to: “mild cognitive impairment”

   We adjusted all points in the text and did the language correction (we have sent the article to a language centre to do language corrections).
Reviewer: Ashma Krishan

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) It is very unclear why the mean barthel index value (table 2) is still being reported especially since the normality assumption is not valid. It seems in this instance the median barthel index value should be reported.  
We changed table 2. We now give median Barthel Index value and the range.

2) In the statistical analysis section in the second paragraph, it is unclear what is meant by “Wilcoxon ranksum test for correlated observations and Mann-Whitney/Kruskall-Wallis tests for independent observations.” Wilcoxon rank-sum test is another name for Mann-Whitney tests and are used for assessing independent observations. Kruskall-Wallis test is a non-parametric equivalent of a one-way ANOVA which is used for 3 or more groups. It may be a good idea to read up on Mann-Whitney and Kruskall-Wallis tests.  
The reviewer is absolutely right. Since both Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney described the same test for independent observations based on the sum of the ranks and Wilcoxon also described a test for correlated observations based on the sum of the signed ranks there is some confusion about the naming of the tests. In the text we now use the term “Wilcoxon signed rank test” and in table 2 in the first row, where correlated observations are reported we used this test (indicated as “Wilcoxon”). In the remaining rows of the table two or more groups are compared either using the Mann-Whitney U test for two groups or the Kruskall-Wallis test for 3 or more groups (indicated as “Kruskall-Wallis/Mann-Whitney”). We understand that this shorthand notation might induce some confusion, so we changed the references to the various tests used in the table (and statistical analysis section).

3) In the results chapter in the section on ‘Caregiver strain’ in the second paragraph, it says “No correlation could be found for these variables.” However, it is not very clear what is meant by could not be found.  
We changed this section into: Gender, social situation, housekeeping, physical activities, hobbies, visiting, depression and anxiety variables were compared to caregiver strain. There were no significant relations between these variables and the amount of caregiver strain (Fisher’s exact test).

4) It is unclear what methods are being used for Table 4. It mentions independent-samples T-test but unsure how t-test is being used. All the variables have 3 or more groups so unclear how t-test could be used.  
The reviewer is right. Only the one-way ANOVA was used in this table.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) In Table 2, the p-value for housekeeping should be reported as p<0.001.  
We changed this in the table.

2) In the results chapter in the section on ‘Daily occupations’ in the second paragraph, it says “Almost the same applies to physical activity.” However, it seems this is not the case since for housekeeping 45% did as much as before
and 30% did less. For physical activity 57% did less and 31% did as much as before. Thus there seems to be a huge disagreement between the two results. 

Indeed, we made a mistake here. We changed this part of the text.

3) There seems to be an error between the results reported in the third paragraph of the ‘Daily occupations’ section and Table 2. According to Table 2 61% of patients did as many hobbies as before and according to the review 36% of the patients had trouble maintaining their hobbies and 34% could not do as much as before. It is unclear where these results are coming from and which are correct and which are incorrect.

We are very sorry. According to table 2, 63% of the patients did as many hobbies as before and we wrote down in the text “thirty-six percent”. We accidentally reversed the digits. It should be “sixty-three”. We changed this in the text.

4) If change in health has been removed then should be removed from last paragraph in the section on ‘Caregiver strain’ too.

We removed this from the text/table.

5) Consistency is required as either all figures should be written in numerical form or all should be written in word form.

Indeed, we changed this in the text. All figures are written in numerical form now.

All authors have read and agreed to the content of the manuscript. The research that is reported in the manuscript has been performed with the approval of an ethics committee. ’All authors declare that they have no competing interests’.

This article has not been published or accepted for publication. It is not under consideration at another journal. No other papers using the same data set have been published.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

Ms L. de Weerd

Also on behalf of,

A.W.F. Rutgers, K.H. Groenier and K. van der Meer