Reviewer’s report

Title: Living with Myotonic Dystrophy; what can be learned from couples? A qualitative study

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Reviewer: Axel Rainer Wintzen

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This study is concerned with the perceived problems of five late-middle aged patients having MD, and their spouses. In the analysis of the interviews special attention is given to the mental handicaps of the patients and their consequences for the interaction between patients and partners. In itself, this is not new, but the present study describes these consequences in great detail and in common, recognizable terms. It renders the section 'Results’ most readable. I consider this a contribution to our understanding of the impact of the disorder.

The physical handicap of these patients is not a major issue in this study and is not specified. To me, this is not irrelevant.

It should be realized, that the study is restricted to persons aged 53-65 years, who usually have accepted their uneasy situation in some way, in contrast with many younger couples. This restricts the generalizability of the conclusions as well.

In my perception the Discussion is too long. It is repetitive and it even generalizes to other chronic disorders. In the paragraph 'Implications for clinicians and policymakers' the essential message of the study is given. Maybe this could serve as the backbone of a more concise Discussion.

Recently, Timman R et al have published a similar study, with partly similar findings.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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