Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 4 April 2011

Reviewer: Katrin Boström

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Five couple has been interviewed after a purposive sample. The only information on patients beside being in the register and having the disease are that they have restrictions in activities of daily living and social participation and that some have difficulties in communication. The only information on partners is that the couples have been living together at least ten years. A table with some background information on the restrictions as well as age on both patient and partner and if working or not, etc should help to highlight their live situation and give a context for the result from the interviews.

When presenting the results “couples” is used and as a reader you don’t know whether this means that both patient and partner in at least two couples express this or if it is two partners in the interview with couples that tell this.

Minor Essential Revisions

The citation ought to be linked to a person – with so few interviewed persons the reader need to be given an indication that the citations relate to several persons. It is also interesting to know whether the partner is male or female. E.g male partner, female patient 1, male patient 2.

Design

Observation on how they live is mentioned but does not show in the result. How was it carried out?

How was the interview situation in their home – was it carried out in a way that made it possible for each of them (patient and partner) to have a confidential situation?

Result

The introduction could be shortened – the number of codes does not tell anything important. To use percentages get a false impression of something computationally. I think the relevant information is that patients gave less information than partners and that most information was gained related to persons with MD1 and least related to partners.

Discussion

On page 24:
Without having any background information on the couples there are comments on it in the discussion part. The persons interviewed need to be described earlier in the paper.

It states “…of value for single persons with MD1..” – the link between the result of this study and single persons need to be expressed better or be removed.

Discretionary Revisions
On page 13 “participants” is used – is it related only to patients or both patients and partners?

Advice on publication
Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest
The research highlights the need to see the person and his/her situation instead of only focusing on symptoms and disease when having a chronic condition.

**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