Reviewer's report

Title: Life satisfaction two-years after stroke onset: the effects of gender, occupational status, memory function and quality of life among stroke survivors (Newsqol) and their family caregivers (Whoqol-bref) in Luxembourg.

Version: 4 Date: 13 August 2012

Reviewer: Theresa Green

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Title: Life satisfaction two-years after stroke onset: the effects of gender, occupational status, memory function and quality of life among stroke survivors (Newsqol) and their family caregivers (Whoqol-bref) in Luxembourg.

General comments

1. The authors have attended to all the comments/suggestions from my previous review and have also responded to manuscript revisions offered by the second reviewer. This has resulted in a much improved and stronger paper. I enjoyed reading the paper and find the results interesting.

Minor Essential Revisions

2. Some grammatical/sentence structure issues remain however, although these are minor and should not be difficult to remedy. For instance, my suggestions for improving clarity include:

3. Abstract:

Methods: ‘…using system database.’ Simply stating ‘system database’ leaves the reader to wonder about whose db, where it is located, etc. This is identified in the methods section – just add it to the abstract, too.

‘Ninety four …individually face-to-face interviewed’ is awkward phrasing. Try ‘…individually interviewed in face-to-face meetings.’

Results: page 2 – ‘…less good’ replace with ‘…worse’

Conclusions: ‘withgender’ needs a space between the words; ‘…patients’ feelings and emotion issues’ try using ‘emotional issues’ instead

- How are ‘feelings' different to 'emotions'? Feelings are a perceived emotional state so they seem to be referring to the same thing. If you have a different interpretation, just need to add a few words to this effect.

4. Background

P 4, new text: could add a footnote giving a description of what the ‘Eurofund committee’ is. Most international readers will not know what this refers to or how it relates to stroke.

P 5, second paragraph, line 4: add ‘not only’ after ‘It affects...”
P 5, second paragraph
Line 4 – ‘It affects not only…
Line 7: move this sentence after the next one – this places the sentence in logical contextual order. That is, start with ‘The ‘Helsingoborg…’ and insert ‘In Sweden…’ right after.

Page 6, new material: The present study is aimed… You could also remove the word ‘the’ in the second line (both times – ‘onset, effects on patients’ …’

Methods: Subheading: Study design, sample and recruitment

Page 7, first line – This was a retrospective health record audit involving all stroke survivors…
second line – ‘identified in the…’
inclusion criteria: remove ‘to live in’; ‘to have been’, ‘to have’

5. Characterization of stroke severity… I would rewrite the text to read something like:

‘The Barthel Index or modified Rankin Score scales were chosen by the expert neurologist on the investigative team as a measure of stroke severity. However, neither internationally recognized standardized scale was documented in the medical records reviewed. Thus, stroke severity was estimated based on the presence of clinical signs...’

Page 8 do not need to re-write the inclusion/exclusion criteria – these are stated above; do keep the paragraph about including aphasic patients; here you talk about ‘four languages’ - this is the first notation of 4 languages; need to put into inclusion criteria and identify which languages they are. Add this section to the inclusion criteria part above on p 7

6. Ethical Restriction – now too much information; Try: ‘Although no similar research has been conducted in Luxembourg, the NCRE did not...member.’ End statement there; the rest is not useful.

Page 9, new text: try ‘As Luxembourg does not have academic medical facilities, all neurologists...

7. Results
Page 13: new text: just a bit of wordsmithing –

Arterial hypertension was the most frequent risk factor (80.8% vs. 75.3% haemorrhagic). More than 50% of the patients presented with elocution troubles and nearly 80% had neurological deficits. Nearly 40% of the patients presented with a known dyslipidaemia, 22.7% suffered from diabetes, and 20.9% were obese [28].

8. Discussion
Page 15, new text:
However, fewer of these cerebrovascular patients were living at home two years
after stroke onset.

This suggests strong psychological repercussions may be generated for both patients and family caregivers.

Using the Newsqol revealed strong associations between four dimensions of pain, cognition, sleep and fatigue due to the stroke, and patients’ LS. This is of interest and not previously reported (in terms of stroke-specific QoL measures).

Consequently, physical and psychological suffering as a repercussion of cerebrovascular disease needs to be assessed. The Newsqol appeared here as an appropriate tool to produce useful indicators to be considered in programs for stroke patients with disabilities.

Our study revealed relationships of patients’ LS with occupational status and gender (do you mean gender in the context of socially constructed roles, or sex, meaning biological male/female?), which also deserve attention. We found that patients with no occupational activity had lower LS.

P 17 first line: womens’ LS was higher – does this mean overall or just for female patients or just for female caregivers?

Women are more likely than men to report non-specific "somatic" symptoms and to report changes in their mental status.

9. Strengths & Limitations
Page 19, ½ way down the page:
In addition, by 2 years post-stroke patients and their family caregivers …

10. Conclusions
Life satisfaction was better among women and worse among unemployed socioeconomically active patients.

Same as in the abstract, how are ‘feelings’ different from emotions?
…life satisfaction was worse in those with patients suffering from feeling…

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 I have no competing interests.