Author’s response to reviews

Title: Caregiver burden in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is more dependent on patients’ behavioral changes than physical disability: a comparative study.

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Prof Amos Korczyn

BMC Neurology Editor

Dear Prof Amos Korczyn,

Re MS: 1931018777704573

Caregiver burden in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is more dependent on patients' behavioral changes than physical disability: a comparative study.

Thank you very much for your correspondence from July 23rd. We were pleased to receive very positive reviews and we did our best to address their valuable points as outlined below.

This re-submission includes the response to the reviewers (attached below), manuscript, Table 1 and figures. The changes suggested by the reviewers are highlighted in yellow in the manuscript.

Additionally, we would like to change the corresponding author to Dr Eneida Mioshi from now on. Please let us know if you require any further changes.

Yours sincerely,

Eneida Mioshi
Response to reviewers

Reviewer's report

Title: Caregiver burden in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is more dependent on patients’ behavioral changes than physical disability: a comparative study.

Version: 2 Date: 15 July 2012 Reviewer: Ettore Beghi Reviewer's report:

The manuscript by Dr Lillo and coworkers entitled “Caregiver burden in ALS is more dependent on patients’ behavioral changes than physical disability: a comparative study” is an interesting report based on the results of a mail survey of 140 caregivers of patients with ALS. Moderate to very severe depression was present in 23% of caregivers and burden was present in about half of them. The strongest predictor of high caregiver burden was patients’ abnormal behaviour (Odds Ratio 1.4). Caregivers’ emotional state was also found to affect burden. On this basis, the authors warn physicians and other professionals caring ALS patients on the detection of these caregivers’ needs which, if properly addressed, are likely to benefit the patients’ well-being. The topic addressed by the authors is relevant and the instruments used to assess patients’ and caregivers’ changes are fairly valid and reliable. However, a major query must be addressed in order to test the external validity of the study results. The authors base their findings and conclusions on the results of a mail interview done among members of a national MND Association. However, there is no indication in the text of the representativeness of this sample. We certainly know that members of a lay association do not represent the general population of the caregivers of the disease managed by that association. This should be acknowledged as a study limitation. In addition, the authors did not mention the numbers of persons addressed in the survey and the proportion of those who decided to participate. These details must be provided under the warning that a response rate less than 70% is a serious source of bias.

Response: This is a very important point and we have now we included a paragraph addressing this issue in the methods section.

Minor queries

1. Participants & Methods, second page, last para: “Fischer’s exact test” perhaps reads “Fisher’s exact test”;

Response: The misspelling has been corrected.

2. Results, first page and para: Given the large overlap between table 1 and text, the table should be deleted;

Response: This is a very good point and Table 1 has been deleted.

3. References: Please revise list because the indication of the journal is inconsistent across references (eg, reference # 4).

Response: The reference list has been corrected. The BMC Neurology format has been used.
Reviewer’s report

Title: Caregiver burden in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is more dependent on patients’ behavioral changes than physical disability: a comparative study.

Version: 2 Date: 24 June 2012 Reviewer: Carmel Armon Reviewer’s report: Minor Essential Revisions:

1. Where p= 0.0000 change to p<0.0001.

Response: These changes have been made.

2. In Table 2 list all variables tested so it will show that indeed only 2 were independently significant.

Response: That is correct, only 2 variables were independently significant but we still wanted to display all variables for the reader to understand the contribution (or lack of) of each variable to the logistic regression.

3. Figs 1-2 better presented as Tables.

Response: We prefer to present that information visually in figures, which seems easier for the reader to capture the results. In addition, we now only have 2 figures in total. We have deleted Figure 3 as suggested below.

4. Fig. 3 - sufficient to provide in text.

Response: Figure 3 has been deleted as recommended.

5. Table 1 -- not needed, can express adequately in text.

Response: Table 1 has been deleted as recommended by both reviewers.