Reviewer's report

Title: Longitudinal proxy measurements in multiple sclerosis: patient-proxy agreement on the impact of MS on daily life over a period of two years.

Version: 1 Date: 18 December 2007

Reviewer: Alessandra Solari

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript evaluates agreement between MS patients and their partners in compilation of the MSIS-29 instrument at baseline and after two years. The topic is of interest, however the study has several weaknesses.

Major points:

The study was performed as part of another one. The authors should give details about the ongoing study in order to understand how the study population was selected, instead of simply writing "patients and proxies respondents were recruited from an ongoing study".

The Dutch version of the MSIS-29 is not documented in any peer-reviewed publication, but only by an abstract dating back to four years ago. We therefore have no peer-reviewed data documenting the properties of the Dutch MSIS-29 and in particular with it has similar properties to the original.

Proxies were partners of MS patients. In the Discussion the authors acknowledge this can be a limitation. However we have very little information about these proxies except their sex and age. In my opinion more information is required, such as proportion of partners actually living with their patients, how long they have known the patient. Given that the some partners are also the care giver, psychological status is also highly relevant to the responses partners are likely to give on the patient MSIS-29. It seems that none of this information was collected and this is a serious weakness.

Reliability should be assessed not only on the two subscores, but also on individual items of the MSIS-29. This because it is possible that a given subscore can be obtained as a result of differing scores on the individual items.

Other limitations are the limited power of the study and uneven retesting. On Table 3 there seems to be a typing error (0.992??).

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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