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: 28 December 2007

Reviewer: Allyson Jones

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Agreement between patient and proxy responses for the Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale (MSIS-29) was examined in 56 patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their partners at 2 points in time. When agreement was examined cross sectionally, it had higher ICC values on MSIS-29 physical scale than the MSIS-29 psychological scale. Evaluating change over time agreement was lower.

Comments and Minor Essential Revisions

Introduction: The introduction presents relevant information to support the significance of such a study.

Methods: The methods provide satisfactory detail. It is unclear, however, what relative timeframe that baseline represented. Was baseline relative to when patients were first seen at the center? How were patients recruited?

Results: Although the authors state no differences were seen between subgroups of the HADS or BRB-N scores, it was unclear whether patients represented a spectrum of severity of cognitive deficits and/or emotional states. Education levels of the patient and proxy are other factors that may affect the level of agreement and should be reported.

Discussion: The Discussion provides a good summary of the results; however, further emphasis is needed on the comparison findings to previous research, particularly with possible influencing factors. Further discussion is needed regarding the practical application of the information.

This is the first study of MS patients to examine agreement longitudinally. This is an important observation to researchers who wish to use proxy respondents when measuring quality of life in MS patients who might not be able to be interviewed. Overall, there are grammatical errors throughout the text which impede the flow of the reading. The study's strengths include a carefully conducted analytic strategy, the inclusion of validated measures, and the prospective design. The limitations consist of exclusion of significantly cognitively impaired patients which limit the results to the patients least likely to need proxy reporting.
Decision
Accept after discretionary revisions
Level of Interest
An article of limited interest
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 that I have no competing interests.