Reviewer’s report

Title: Perceived needs and satisfaction with care in people with multiple sclerosis: a two-year prospective study

Version: 3 Date: 11 July 2008

Reviewer: David Hoaglin

Reviewer’s report:

I am disappointed by the authors' responses to most of my comments. I am accustomed to seeing more-positive responses to constructive suggestions. I have the impression that the authors want to change their manuscript as little as possible. For example, I suggested (as a discretionary revision) a further analysis of the relation between receipt of immunomodulatory treatment and participants' feeling burdened by the costs of care. The authors offered the excuse that they do not have data on the participants' financial situation, and they believe that the question is somewhat outside the scope of their study. The analysis that I suggested would not require such data; I referred only to "appropriate covariates," in addition to receipt of immunomodulatory treatment. Further, if the question is outside the scope of the study, why did the authors introduce it? I have some additional suggestions, but I am not very enthusiastic about this manuscript.

Major Compulsory Revisions: none

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. At the top of page 9, the meaning of the sentence that begins "On a group level" is not clear, in part because the authors have not defined a group (or groups). (The same sentence [up to the semicolon] appears in the Results section of the abstract and also at the bottom of page 12.) I believe the authors are talking about variations over time, as they state in the Conclusions section on page 15. They should make the role of time explicit in the places where it is not now explicit, and perhaps avoid referring to "a group level."

2. In the list of percentages at the middle of page 9, why is 60.5% not rounded? Several of the other percentages would end in 0.5% if carried out to tenths of a percent. Also, shouldn't the 56% for "information on social insurance/vocational rehabilitation" be 57%?

3. Table 3 would be much more accessible to readers if the Need column were expanded to include a column of percentages (rounded to the nearest multiple of 1%) and the columns of numbers under Satisfied were replaced by columns of percentages with the number on the same row in the Need column as a base. For example, the three entries for Physiotherapy/Sometimes would be 42, 37, and 20 (correctly rounded percentages do not always add up to exactly 100%, and it would be a mistake to "adjust" them to have that total). This treatment will
allow readers to see the distribution of satisfaction for each level of perceived need, without burdensome mental arithmetic.

4. The paragraph on pages 11 and 12 is much too long; it covers nearly two pages! The topics that it discusses should logically yield a sequence of much smaller paragraphs. I easily found nine such paragraphs. Similarly, the paragraph on pages 12 and 13 could be broken up into at least three shorter paragraphs.

Discretionary Revisions: none

**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.