Reviewer's report

Title: The size of the treatment effect: do patients and proxies agree?

Version: 2 Date: 15 September 2008

Reviewer: A. Simon Pickard

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written paper utilizing analytic techniques common to the literature on patient-proxy agreement, and one of the first to be performed in MS.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Under methods/procedures. Did all patients and proxies complete the questionnaire at initial visit by themselves, or was there interviewer assistance?
2. Under results, first paragraph. How many patients/proxies declined to participate? [n, %]
3. A general observation in the proxy literature is that proxy raters tend to rate patients as having poorer HRQL than patients themselves (Sneeuw et al, 2002). How do your results (e.g. Table 3) compare to studies of proxies in other conditions (e.g. stroke, cancer)? It seems curious that proxy respondents in the "not improved" group reported a 4-point decline in MSIS-29 scores (ES=0.30), in the opposite direction of proxy respondents for the improved group.
4. Table 3: Although not statistically significant, effect sizes of difference between changes scores appear to be ~0.30. Note in limitations that you may be underpowered to detect a true difference in scores given the small sample sizes in the subgroups (not improved, improved).

Discretionary 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 interest