Reviewer’s report

Title: The functional status and well being of people with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome and their carers

Version: 3 Date: 30 March 2011

Reviewer: Jin-Mann Lin

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

The authors have added some description in case ascertainment; however, it is not really clear how they applied the three case definition criteria. For example, while applying CDC-1994 how many subjects had at least 4 CFS accompany symptoms lasting >= 6 months, not alleviated by rest, substantial reduction in activities, etc. It was suggest providing a table with such kind of information across three criteria in Appendix so that readers can visualize how the criteria actually applied.

Minor Essential Revisions:

Page 10. In the first sentence for the “Study size” section, it indicated that “43” named carers while n=44 listed in several places of Table 1. Please clarify this.

Page 10. In Line #5 of the Results section, the authors stated “The median age of onset of symptoms was 41.5 years…, corresponding to a median duration of fatigue of 10 years…” Please describe how the age of onset of symptoms was defined. Is it the onset of fatigue? Or the onset of CFS illness or some specific symptoms?

Table 5. The n’s listed in the current version of the manuscript were slightly different from the previous version. The number of patients with Canadian diagnostic criteria was 96 in the current Table 5 whereas it was 95 in the previous version. Please clarify this. In the current Table 1, 166 patients met CDC-1994 criteria. Does this mean that 96 patients with Canadian criteria (also met CDC-1994) plus 70 patients met CDC-1994 only? Please clarify this.

Page 16. “Study strengths and limitations”, line #4, “The response rate for carers was nor particularly high”. “nor” could be a typo?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.