Reviewer’s report

Title: Mental health and wellbeing in spouses of persons with dementia: the Nord-Trondelag health study

Version: 3 Date: 7 April 2014

Reviewer: Karlijn J Joling

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Abstract. The authors state that “Having a partner with dementia that resided in a nursing home was associated PERHAPS with more symptoms of anxiety compared with at-home caregivers”. I think this statement is not appropriate, since their results show that the difference between caregiver groups was not significant for anxiety (p13).

2. Introduction. Although the authors have tried to restructure the introduction considerably, I think this section is still not very focused and some parts are more appropriate for the Discussion (e.g. strengths of their study). Also, I would advise to put the aims of the study together and make these more specific. Suggestion: The main aim was to investigate the level of depressive and anxious symptoms and life satisfaction among spouses of community-dwelling persons with dementia compared to spouses of persons with dementia living in a nursing home as well as a reference group of spouses of elderly people without dementia. Objective 2: to investigate to what extent key variables such as…. mediated the relationship between having a demented partner and mental health outcomes in the caregiver. Etc.

3. Methods. The methods section provides a lot of details which can be omitted. Also, it would be helpful for readers to structure the measures section and differentiate between Outcome measures, main determinant, potential mediators and moderators.

4. There are way too many tables. I could see dropping Table 1 and 2, or present this in an Appendix. Also, consider to present only the adjusted analyses and combine Table 4-6.

5. Discussion. Comparison with literature: Although it might be difficult to compare findings with previous studies investigating the incidence with diagnostic measures, there are lots of studies which evaluated symptoms of depression (and anxiety) with self-report questionnaires. E.g. in the introduction the authors mentioned several previous studies which showed that 20-50% of dementia carers present high levels of depression. How do the findings of this study relate to these figures?

6. Discussion. Clinical relevance of the findings: How many persons scored above the HADS cut-off indicating the presence of clinically significant anxiety and depression? Can the authors elaborate on this in their discussion?
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