Reviewer's report

Title: Gender differences in patients with dizziness and unsteadiness regarding self-perceived disability, emotional distress, symptom severity and its associations

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Reviewer: KATHRINE JAUREGUI-RENAUD

Reviewer's report:

"Gender differences in patients with dizziness and unsteadiness regarding self-perceived disability, emotional distress, symptom severity and its associations"

This is an interesting study aimed to: explore whether female /male patients differ (1) in the extent of self-perceived disability, symptom severity, anxiety and depression, (2) in the prevalence of severe disability, anxiety and depression, and (3) in the associations of these aspects; and to compare the prevalence of anxiety and depression in women and men of our study-population with the one of a German speaking general population. However, compulsory revisions preclude publication in its present form:

Background

Since the study was designed to assess gender differences and to compare the results with the general population, the introduction should give the reader a better background about studies looking at the relationship between gender and mental disorders, particularly anxiety and depression (including changes through time and space); as well as previous findings from international studies and studies made within the same socio-economic/ cultural context (eg. Switzerland), on the prevalence of anxiety and depression in both, patients seeking medical care and the general population.

The rationale behind the choice (or not) of potential confounding variables is not reported (eg. socio-demographic characteristics like employment status, marital status and level of education; comorbidities as well as potential stressors).

Methods

There is no explanation about how the study size was calculated, both to compare groups and to estimate prevalence.

According to the main objectives, there is no explanation to support why the sample sizes are so unequal, when the main outcome would require a design to optimize comparisons between two groups (while considering interactions).

There is no description of: the sampling technique, the number of eligible subjects, the subjects examined for eligibility and those who were excluded for the analysis (eg. missing data). Also there is no report on the number of subjects declining to participate.
The description of the characteristics of the participants is not including their general socio-demographic characteristics, at least: the employment status, the marital status and the level of education.

The age interval and the age distribution of the 2 groups are not described.

The description of the vestibular disease is not complete; the information about recurrent vertigo and more specific diagnostics are missing. The diagnostic criteria should also be described.

There is no information about co-morbidities.

The manuscript describes a bivariate analysis, including multiple comparisons and correlations (apparently without significance corrections), which may be exploratory. However, the results of a multivariate confirmation of the findings (including potential confounders) are not described.

Results

The description of the results and the tables correspond to an exploratory analysis, which could be summarized. However, the multivariate analysis, including potential confounders, would be essential to confirm any finding.

Discussion

The contribution of confounding factors should be discussed after a complete analysis is performed, considering the available literature.

The limitations of the study are not fully described (eg. the instrument selected to assess depression cannot differentiate depressive states, the power of the study to test all the comparisons and correlations).

Conclusion

The conclusions are only partially supported by the study.

Abstract

The abstract may have to be modified accordingly.

**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