Author’s response to reviews

Title: The hidden cost of chronic fatigue to patients and their families

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear editors,

I would like to thank you and the reviewers for the comments on the manuscript “The hidden cost of chronic fatigue to patients and their families”. The responses to the referees’ concerns are detailed below. The paper has been revised and follows the journal style. The unnecessary references have been deleted.

Sincerely,

Ramon Sabes-Figuera

Referee1:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
- Regression models without WASA variable: The analyses without this variable have been carried out as a sensitivity analyses and the results have been reported in the text (page 11)

Minor Essential Revisions
- Abstract: line 5, add "aim" after "The main"; correction done
- Page 4, introduction: change the term "predictors" of fatigue with a more neutral term: The expression “predictors of costs” has been replaced by the term “Factors associated with costs”.

Referee2:

Major compulsory revisions
- What seems lacking is a clear description of the procedures used in this study: Information on the procedures of the study as required by the referee was included in the text on pages 4, 5 and 9.

- Throughout the paper I kept wondering what this study adds to what is already known about the costs of chronic fatigue: Few studies have measured the costs associated with chronic fatigue. We feel this adds to the evidence in that it is a large sample with a cost period that is likely to capture most key service components. In addition, we have attempted to model the distribution of costs more appropriately.

- In the Limitations section an important drawback is missing, i.e. the instrument used to measure production costs: We have including a sentence in the limitations section (page 13) acknowledging that the presenteeism costs are not included. However, the instrument used to collect data on lost work time has been used in numerous studies in mental and physical healthcare and we are confident that the amount of lost work time is reasonably estimated.

Minor essential revisions
- Please spell out NHS in the abstract for the non-UK readers: correction done on page 2
• The authors state in their introduction that they aim to ‘identify predictors of these costs’. As this a cross-sectional study, it is better to rephrase this throughout the paper as ‘factors associated with these costs’: correction done

• In the Analyses section the authors mention some questionnaires that were used, such as the WASA. Information on the measures used should be mentioned earlier in the Method section: correction done on pages 6 and 8.

• On page 4 the authors write that the gap in perceptions might be caused by the lack of enquiry or awareness of the social and economic costs: Can they explain this assumption? :One of the reasons for not taking seriously the fatigue could be that doctors do not see and therefore are not aware of the real impact of the condition in the life of the patients. We have referred to this on page 4.

• And can they elaborate more in their Discussion on how they think their results can be used to increase awareness in health care workers? : The relevant paragraph at the conclusion section (page 14) has been modified with the aim of adding clarity about this.