Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Esther de Graaf

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript aims to explore the costs of chronic fatigue in a primary care sample and tries to identify factors associated with these costs. Although it is well written, I found it difficult to follow because important details of the method used are missing. I think the paper can be improved if various aspects are explained better.

Major compulsory revisions

1. What seems lacking is a clear description of the procedures used in this study. How were participants recruited and by whom? How, where and when took the assessments place, both the interview and the questionnaires? How did the authors determine whether someone met the inclusion and exclusion criteria? Can the authors also provide some information about the flow of their participants, e.g. how many people were asked to participate and how many met the criteria but refused to participate?

2. Throughout the paper I kept wondering what this study adds to what is already known about the costs of chronic fatigue. Can the authors make this clearer in their introduction?

3. In the Limitations section an important drawback is missing, i.e. the instrument used to measure production costs. It seems that they authors did not use a validated instrument for this (e.g. the prodisq). Furthermore, questions regarding compensation mechanisms in case of absence from pain word and efficiency loss or presenteeism are missing but might be important to consider in chronic fatigue.

Minor essential revisions

1. Please spell out NHS in the abstract for the non-UK readers.

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’.

3. 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.

4. 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? Why do they think that lack of awareness of social and
economic costs is the reason for this gap? And can they elaborate more in their Discussion on how they think their results can be used to increase awareness in health care workers?

**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.