Reviewer's report

Title: Appropriate disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia: identifying the key behaviours of 'best practice'

Version: 1 Date: 11 January 2008

Reviewer: Els Derksen

Reviewer's report:

Introduction:
The article describes a well-defined and executed study about behaviours of 'best practice' in disclosure in dementia. The study, with his focus on the disclosure meeting itself, will surely add to improvement of disclosure in dementia.

The aim of this study: to identify key behaviours of 'best practice' in disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia is well-defined and the focus on the disclosure meeting itself is new. The methods are appropriate and well described. Replication of the study can be done.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The literature review is done properly and the choice not to focus on disclosure in dementia only, but also on breaking bad news and disclosure of cancer provides a complete picture of disclosure behaviours. However I have one essential comment:

The literature was searched to July 2004, more than three years later an update would be appropriate. Especially on disclosure in dementia there have been some recent publications. Our group, for example, published in 2006 the following article:


Two other articles are:


I don't expect a complete update of the review, but in the discussion section the findings in this study need to be replaced in recent literature on disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia.

Discretionary revisions:
2. Furthermore, in the results of the literature review it stays unclear which behaviours were revealed from disclosure in dementia or disclosure in cancer or breaking bad news.

3. In presenting the identified behaviours, at first a more quantitative method (counting, ranking) is used to describe the qualitative data. The results of the literature review have been qualified as an extensive range of behaviours, while the results of the interviews got the qualification: a snapshot. To my opinion the authors do wrong to their own work. Because the qualitative discussion of the results is the most valuable, this deserves a firm accent. (See also remark 5)

4. After combination of behaviours resulting in 208 behaviours, the eight categories were reduced to seven categories. It stays unclear to me what the reason was for removing the category of integrating family members, because in the discussion the authors concluded that the panel put a great emphasis on this category?

5. For the purpose of developing an intervention, three key behaviours have been selected by consensus between five members of the research team. Why just three behaviours? And not five or seven? I presume that more behaviours meet the criteria mentioned at page 7. A selection of three behaviours doesn’t comprise the richness of the data.

I am looking forward to the final version of this study and to results of the intervention study.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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