Author’s response to reviews

Title: Perceptions of self-rated health among stroke survivors: A qualitative study in the United Kingdom

Authors:

Nahal Mavaddat (nahal.mavaddat@uwa.edu.au)
Euan Sadler (euan.sadler@kcl.ac.uk)
Lisa Lim (lccl2@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Kate Williams (kmw36@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Elizabeth Warburton (eaw23@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Ann Louise Kinmonth (alk25@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Jonathan Mant (jm677@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Jenni Burt (jab35@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Christopher McKevitt (christopher.mckevitt@kcl.ac.uk)

Version: 1 Date: 13 Oct 2017

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BMC Geriatrics

Editor

29 September 2017

Dear Dr Bøttcher Berthelsen,

Re: our submission "Perceptions of self-rated health among stroke survivors: A qualitative study in the United Kingdom" (BGTC-D-17-00145)
We thank you very much for reviewing our manuscript and inviting us to resubmit our paper to BMC Geriatrics with minor revisions. We have now addressed the revisions suggested by the reviewers as follows:

Methods

Exclusion of stroke survivors that had severe aphasia and cognitive impairments: Although this has been acknowledged in the limitations section, it may be worth viewing this as an area of future research. The findings of this study showed that aphasia influenced SRH. Therefore, despite the difficulty, in order to aid post-stroke care in survivors with severe aphasia, it may beneficial to try to ascertain whether the findings of this study hold for those with severe aphasia i.e. are the coping strategies and factors (modifiable and non-modifiable) for this subgroup of stroke survivors the same or similar.

In the limitations section of the discussion (page 27, lines 18-21) we have now discussed the importance of future research investigating SRH perceptions among stroke survivors with aphasia to ascertain if similar or different factors influence perceptions of SRH among this group. We have also explained the reason for exclusion of those with cognitive deficit due to being unable to give informed consent to participating in the study.

Inclusion of participants with first confirmed stroke: Would these findings be similar for survivors of multiple strokes? It may be worth mentioning in the discussion and/or conclusion that the findings of this study are specifically for first confirmed stroke survivors and may not apply to survivors of multiple strokes.

We have now also acknowledged in the limitations section of the discussion (page 27, lines 21-23) that the findings of our study relate to individuals who had a first diagnosed stroke, which may not be applicable to those who have survived multiple strokes.

Measure of physical disability was taken either on discharge or at 6-week follow-up outpatients clinic. It is mentioned in the limitation section that in order to minimise variation in different
stages of recovery, interviews were carried out between 4-6 weeks after stroke. In the same vain, it should be noted that measuring disability either on discharge or 6 weeks after discharge and then using SRH assessment at 4/6 months introduces variation. For example, if measure of disability was assessed on discharge and SRH at 4/6 weeks the comparison between objective physical disability and SRH may be inaccurate if improvement has occurred in the 4/6 week period.

We have now acknowledged in the limitations section of the discussion (page 28, lines 12-14) that there may have been subtle changes in self-rated health assessment during this period, and that it is also uncertain whether our observations focusing on subjective health perceptions in stroke survivors would remain true for participants in the longer-term.

Findings

Figure 1 should be presented and referred to on page 10 where the 3 themes entitled: how am I now? how was I before? how will I be in the future? are being introduced.

Figure 1 has now been moved from page 25 line 8 and placed on page 10 and line number 20 now)

The psychological influences of how was I before needs to be rewritten as it contains a fair bit of repetition (from line 21 on page 20 to line 38 on page 21).

This section has been revised to reduce repetition (from page 20, line 22 to page 21, line 14).

In addition, we have read though the paper again and corrected any typological errors and some missing pronouns, nouns and adjectives. We have also revised the acknowledgement statement so that it is accurate, slightly edited the title and table heading in table 1, and changed the font style/size in the reference list to match that in the main document.
The information on data availability on page 29 lines 20-22 has also been updated.

Please let us know if you have any additional queries. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely

Nahal Mavaddat, and on behalf of co-authors.

School of Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care
University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Highway
Crawley, Perth
Western Australia 6009
+61 93467503
nahal.mavaddat@uwa.edu.au