Reviewer’s report

Title: Refining caregiver vulnerability for clinical practice: Determinants of self-rated health in spousal dementia caregivers

Version: 0 Date: 27 Apr 2018

Reviewer: Clotilde Larochette

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript entitled « Refining caregiver vulnerability for clinical practice: determinants of self-rated health in spousal dementia caregivers » proposes to show which demographic and health characteristics influence the self-reported health of spouse caregivers of person with dementia. This article is of interest to the scientific community because it highlights the signs that clinicians must pay attention to preserve the health of carers and provide them with appropriate support.

ABSTRACT

At the beginning, authors specified the population and the interest of using the SHR with family caregivers.

The method part is clear.

In the discussion of the abstract authors propose an implication for the clinical practice, but this link is not sufficiently highlighted in the continuation of the article.

BACKGROUND

The introduction is structured and references are recent.

It is easy to understand that the difficulties associated with the caregiver role have consequences for health. The interest of having a simple tool with a powerful predictive value is highlighted.

SHR fulfills these qualities and has been evaluated in similar populations. However, the studies cited refer to participants over 60 years old, but here the population is 55 years or older.

Finally, as indicated by the authors, it seems interesting to explore what demographic and health determinants influence self-reported health. But, hypotheses are not clearly defined. We don't know what specific characteristics might influence SHR and why.
METHOD

Study participants

Two questions appear on reading the recruitment of participants:

- Why is the number of participants included so small when there have been more than two years of recruitment? The authors could explain what difficulties were encountered during recruitment.

- Participants must be at least 55 years old, but the choice of this criterion is not explained. According to the WHO, people over 60 are considered to be elderly. In addition, the studies cited in the background section show results for populations aged 60 and over. The authors could explain this choice.

Measures

The different paragraphs concerning the measures give the necessary information. We particularly appreciate that the caregiving stressors are measured objectively and subjectively.

Data analysis

The sentence "Post hoc analyses…” l.40 can be more developed.

RESULTS

The samples are not equivalent in the groups but this question is treated in the limitations.

It seems obvious that people who report poorer health than others have more health problems, lower physical function. The interest of putting forward this result can be explained.

The result "association between caregiving stressors and health characteristic" does not refer to any starting hypothesis. Authors can give more information about this result and make a transition with other parts of results.

In the third part, for ease of reading, it may be possible to rename the SHR categories. For example: Group 1 (G1) = poor / fair.
DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the discussion, the authors should remember the objectives of the study.

P13, L30. Indeed, the role of positive affect in the SRH does not seem to have been studied in caregivers. But this part deserves a little more attention and development especially thanks to the following article or others. Benyamini, Y., Idler, E. L., Leventhal, H., & Leventhal, E. A. (2000). Positive affect and function as influences on self-assessments of health: Expanding our view beyond illness and disability. The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 55(2), P107-P116.

Finally, the authors clearly express the interest of using this single-question to identify, evaluate and support caregivers.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
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Yes

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