Reviewer’s report

Title: The need for improved cognitive, hearing and vision assessments for older people with cognitive impairment: A qualitative study

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Reviewer: Claudia Jacova

Reviewer's report:

This qualitative study focuses on the experience of persons with dementia (PwD) and their caregivers of hearing, vision, and cognitive assessments. The authors make a good case for the need for such a study: it is clear that sensory and cognitive impairments interact, and all need to be addressed in order to ensure the best possible disease trajectory in neurocognitive disorders. I also appreciated the need for qualitative data, with perspectives obtained from both PwD and their caregivers. Finally, the multisite nature of the study is also a strength. However, there are also weaknesses that the authors should address to make the manuscript suitable for publication.

1. The writing is often unclear, and this is not so much a problem of writing in English as it is conveying the themes that the authors have identified. For example, in describing the results, lines 246 to 250, it is difficult to understand what exactly these themes are. The headings are not very informative either, for example lines 252-253: here the heading refers to the PwDs knowledge of the assessment, and then specifies differences regarding impairments and the use of corrective devices. What differences are these? There is a very interesting finding of reluctance among PwDs to have assessments done at their own home. However, this is then mixed with the proper cleaning of what I assume are hearing aids. Lines 368 through 372 are really difficult to understand because there is now mention of training and support services rather than strictly assessments.

2. There was purposive selection of participants in order to ensure a representative range of sociodemographic characteristics and disease severity. However it is not explained how this was done, particularly given recruitment problems mentioned later on in the manuscript. One of the inclusion criteria was self-reported sensory impairment among PwDs, but in Table 2 one of these participants is described as Not Reported. It would also be important to report disease duration, or time since diagnosis, so that the data can be interpreted more meaningfully.

3. The questions used during focus groups and semistructured interviews appear clear in Table 1 but in the text the focus is somewhat different, and centers around the impact of visual, hearing, and cognitive impairments on the lives of PwDs and their caregivers. These two foci are somewhat different.

4. One of the most significant issues that the authors acknowledge to some extent, is asking PwDs about their perception of the various assessments. It is absolutely important to obtain insight into the experience of persons with dementia, the approach the authors take relies very much on PwDs recall. It might have been much better to interview the patients directly following
a specific assessment. Also, the approach appears to treat sensory and cognitive assessments as similar and comparable, but this would have been a very good point to address in the interviews. Are they experienced similarly? Do the perceived weaknesses in one type of assessment apply to other assessments?

5. The overall contribution of the study is somewhat unfocused: the authors call for better communication on the part of health professionals, better education of caregivers, better inclusiveness of patients, but these recommendations seem quite generic and would probably apply to any type of care provided to PwDs and their caregivers. It is difficult to extract from this specific guidelines that may help with future vision, hearing, and cognitive assessments.

6. The discussion does not provide a lot of connections with existing literature on the subjective experience of assessments among patients. There is a small body of studies on the experience of cognitive screening that the authors should consult. I am not sure whether any studies have been done on the patients' experience of vision and hearing assessments but whether or not, this should be clearly stated.

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

No

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?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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Not relevant to this manuscript

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