Reviewer’s report

Title: Caregivers’ perspectives and experiences of withdrawing acetylcholinesterase inhibitors and memantine in advanced dementia: a qualitative analysis of an online discussion forum

Version: 0 Date: 18 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Geraldine Foley

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you to the authors for the opportunity to review this well presented manuscript. My comments are as follows:

Abstract:

I think the end of the last sentence in the abstract is a separate concluding point - the point on randomised-control medication discontinuation trials. (see also comment on the 'Conclusion' of the main manuscript).

Main text

Methods:

- First sentence under methods - please alter sentence so that it reports that Talking Point is a fully public online discussion hosted by Alzheimer's Society (UK)

- Line 19, p.6. Split into a new sentence. 'Relevant threads and posts were then copied into a ........'

- p.6 - lines 22-51. please edit/revise this section so that you are reporting on what was actually done by the researchers in the analysis (main steps). The current version is simply reporting on what usually happens when analysing data under the Framework method. So please revise so that is clear to the reader each main step of analysis undertaken in 'this' study. Maintain the last sentence 'To the best of the authors' knowledge........'

Results:

The name of the theme 'The opinion of others' is somewhat tangential. The authors are advised to revise the heading of the theme so that it captures better the content under the theme. Perhaps 'Expectations about withdrawal'?
Please also (within this theme) refer to expectation versus experience as it is indicated in this theme that some participants had not experienced the withdrawal but had certain expectations based on advice from others.

Discussion:

- Please remove the heading 'Main findings/results from the study'

- Please condense considerably the first paragraph of the discussion. Much of the first paragraph here delves too much into the use of discussion forums for other conditions which really isn't so much about discussing the findings from this research project. I would advise maintain the first sentence of this paragraph. Then condense the writing up until the final sentence of the paragraph. Maintain the last sentence of the paragraph.

- p.19, line 12 - the in-text reference for Doody et al. should read Doody et al. [Not Doody et al. (2001)].

Conclusion:

The authors are advised to remove the very end of the last sentence 'despite the difficulties recognised......'.

It is not fully clear how the findings from 'this' study lead to the decisive conclusion on the need for large-scale randomised controlled discontinuation studies.

**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?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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