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: 23 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Andrea Hilton

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for asking me to review this article.

This is clearly a timely piece of research in an important area of practice. Using on line discussion forums are a rich data source which are underutilised; of course they are not designed for research and thus have limitations.

I have provided specific comments as below:

Title- I think "caregiver" should be explicit within the title. The focus throughout the text is caregiver.

page 4 line 49 - it would be useful to give some context to reference 28. What was presented previously? Whilst the authors have stated significant further analysis and discussion, it needs to be explicit to ensure there is no publication duplication.

Methods - it may be useful to include a diagram to explain the forum/threads/posts etc (page 4 - 5)

Page 6 line 5 - when was the inception of Talking point - useful to have a date for context. Was there a pilot with the search terms? How can the authors be assured they have analysed all the material?

Given the search terms listed and the results e.g. spelling of memantine - how was this managed? For example if the participant spelled the drug name incorrectly on the forum how was this included in the search and subsequent analysis? Whilst I note the discussion in the limitation section... I think this needs clarifying and expanding.

How can the researchers be assured the forum was based around "advance dementia"- I appreciate one of the search terms was "advance dementia" but I think more discussion is needed here. If there is a suspicion this is not just in advanced dementia the title should be changed.

It would be useful to know how many participants are included in the analysis? So there were 95 threads from how many participants? How many could be identified as a caregiver and how many could be identified as a person with dementia? Were all themes equally as strong?
Where there is only one "quote" to support the theme, this should be enhanced with other quotes e.g. page 9 line 39 - is there another participant other than Evelyn to support "...a small number of members reported positive experiences......"

page 9 line 49 - how many carers reported no difference....a number here would give context.

as above page 10 - line 7 and other areas

Page 16 - is the first reference to over a decade of forum activity - this should be much earlier. Was one year more "popular" than another year?

Page 17 with respect to withdrawing medication, it would be useful for the authors to discuss the "hope" that medication brings and shared decision making regarding discontinuing medication.

Page 17 - line 29 - editorially there is a bracket missing.

**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.

Yes

**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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