Reviewer’s report

Title: Informal caregivers of clients with neurological conditions: profiles, patterns and risk factors for distress from a Home Care prevalence study

Version: 1 Date: 10 April 2014

Reviewer: Colin Reid

Reviewer’s report:

This study provides a profile of caregivers to home care clients who suffer from each of 11 different types of neurological conditions. It also estimates prevalence of caregiver distress for each condition and seeks to identify associations between distress and condition, caregiver and care receiver characteristics (risk factors). The study makes use of RAI-HC data from two Canadian jurisdictions: Winnipeg and Ontario. These are large data bases that cover a relatively long period of time (2003-2010). Logistic regression was employed to identify risk factors for CG distress for each of the 11 conditions. Large minorities of clients were found to have at least one of the 11 neurological conditions. Caregivers to clients with neurological conditions were more likely to experience distress than were CGs to other clients. The main risk factors for distress were reported to be number of informal CG hours and MAPLe scores. Some individual conditions (e.g., Huntington’s) were associated with CG distress but clients’ characteristics and informal hours of care were found to be more important risk factors. The authors argue that this study is the first (save one other) to provide such estimates and that they will be useful for the development of CG support strategies.

I have only seven minor essential revisions to suggest.

1. An assessment of the validity of the distress measure is needed.

2. Justification for the RAI-HC scales included in this study is needed (e.g., CPS, ADL, etc.). Why these particular scales or risk factors?

3. A p-value of .05 is used to determine statistical significance. Given the large dataset, a comment on the reason for using such a liberal cut-off is needed.

4. Limitations should probably include something about the weak measure of CG distress

5. Expressions such as “insignificantly related” (p. 13) “insignificant” (p. 13) and “significantly related” (p. 13) should read, respectively, “unrelated”, “non-significant” and “related” wherever else they occur in the paper.

6. Another minor observation: The title of the paper uses the expression “caregivers of” while elsewhere the expression “caregivers to” is used.

7. The first sentence in the first full paragraph on page 19 contains an incorrect
statement. Since informal caregivers provide 80-85% of informal care to seniors, a withdrawal of such care could not realistically result all care needs being borne by the formal health care system. It would, to my mind, be more likely that many care needs would simply go unmet.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.