The present study is part of the Innovations in Data, Evidence and Applications for Persons with Neurological Conditions (ideas PNC) study, which is preparing an evidence base for the Neurological Health Charities of Canada (NHCC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) on the needs, access to services and interventions, quality of care, and resource requirements of persons with neurological conditions and their informal caregivers. This paper focuses specifically on caregiver characteristics and distress determinants among home care recipients with neurological conditions. A large sample of neurologically impaired individuals representing 11 different conditions and their primary caregiver were identified for this study—505,000 in Ontario and 36,000 in Winnipeg. A comparison group of non-neurologically impaired individuals and their caregivers is also included, but little information is provided about the latter population. This paper addresses important and interesting questions using a very large sample, an important strength of this manuscript. That said, there are a number of issues/questions that need to be addressed in a revision of the paper.

**Major Revisions**

1. Clarification is needed about the derivation of the two samples. Was the parent population for both groups all individuals receiving home care? How were individual diagnoses obtained? What were the key characteristics of the non-neurological population in terms of illnesses and disability?

2. Clarification on the assessment of distress is needed. A client’s “caregiver was considered to be in distress if one or both of the following was indicated on the assessment: 1) a caregiver is unable to continue in caring activities; 2) the primary caregiver expresses feelings of distress, anger or depression. These two items are coded by the home care program’s assessors based on clinical judgment informed by their observations and information provided by the client and caregiver.” It is not clear why criterion 1 above is considered an indicator of distress. For example, a caregiver may be unable to continue because of illness or disability which would not necessarily reflect distress. It is also not clear whether the definition of distress is meant to reflect stress due to caregiving or other problems in the caregiver’s life. Thus, criterion 2 above does not explicitly indicate that caregiver “expresses feelings of distress, anger or depression.”
BECAUSE OF CAREGIVING DEMANDS or their caregiving situation. This needs to be clarified.

3. On p. 13 the authors state that “A relatively small proportion of primary caregivers felt that the client would be better off living elsewhere; this was true for 35.1% of caregivers of clients with the neurological conditions.” This seems like a high percentage to me. It’s not clear what this means—better for whom, the patient or the caregiver? Could this be another indicator of distress?

Minor Revisions

1. Did the unadjusted logistic regression model include only the 11 diagnostic categories and not all of the other variables listed (Table 4). This seems odd. Wouldn’t you want to include all variables and then see what drops out in the adjusted model?

2. All of the tables should contain sample size information.

3. p. 16: “the majority of care received comes from informal sources, and the provision of that care often comes at a considerable physical and emotional cost to informal caregivers” This is an exaggeration given the data presented. The authors do not present any direct evidence concerning physical and emotional cost. Distress is not the same as physical health effects or depressive symptoms, two common outcomes in caregiver studies.

Overall, this paper contains interesting and important descriptive data. It could be a good addition to the literature once the issues identified above have been addressed

Richard Schulz

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests