INTRODUCTION

- Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic progressive neurologic disease and one of the most common causes of disability among young adults.
- Although the clinical manifestations and symptoms of MS are diverse, disease severity is generally measured by ambulation based Expanded Disease Severity Scale (EDSS).
- While EDSS captures well the level of disability due to the involvement of ambulatory functions, its ability to take into account other aspects such as fatigue and mental function are poor.
- The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between two patient-based measures in a Finnish MS population, a self-administered EDSS and Multiple Sclerosis Impact Scale (MSIS-29), a psychometrically validated instrument evaluating the physical (20 items) and psychological (9 items) impact of MS.

METHODS

- As described in more detail in Ruutiainen et al. (2015), 553 Finnish persons with MS (PwMS) drawn from the membership register of the national patient society completed a postal survey, which aimed at determining the economic and health-related quality of life (HRQoL) burden of MS in Finland.
- Survey questionnaire included self-administered EDSS and MSIS-29. EDSS score ranges from 0 to 9 and MSIS-29 from 0 to 100. Higher scores imply more severe disease burden.

RESULTS

- PwMS at every impairment level of the EDSS scale were represented (Figure 1). Mean EDSS of the study sample was 4.0.
- The physical impact of MS was strongly related to disease severity, with the scores ranging from 3.0 in the mildest disease (EDSS 0) to 76.2 in the most severe disease (EDSS 8 – 9) (Figure 2).
- The psychological impact increased synchronously with the EDSS score in mild disease (EDSS 0 - 3) and peaked at EDSS 5, declining thereafter from EDSS 5 to 7 (Figure 2).
- In most severe disability (EDSS 8 – 9) the psychological impact of MS was equally high as in EDSS 4.

CONCLUSIONS

- The subjective physical burden of MS increases steadily with self-assessed disease severity.
- The psychological burden does not go hand in hand with the self-assessed severity of the disease.
- The decrease in self-assessed psychological burden in patients with most advanced disease may refer to adjustment to the disability.