Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of life 6 months after surgical intensive care

Version: Date: 2 February 2007

Reviewer: Cristina Granja

Reviewer's report:

General
The study by Abelha et al. is a single-center, prospective observational study, aiming to assess health-related quality of life (HRQOL) and independence in activities of daily living (ADL), six months after surgical ICU discharge and to study their determinants.

1) The questions posed by the authors are not new but are well defined.
2) The methods are not completely appropriate or completely well described, as pointed out in the revision.
3) Presentation of data needs improvement, as suggested in the revision.
4) Discussion and Conclusions needs improvement.
5) Title and abstract accurately convey what has been found.
6) The writing needs improving.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. The manuscript needs English editing and improvement.
2. Introduction:
   Page 5
   Lines 1 and 2 - Please be more rigorous in the language used, the reader may not have the same definition of what the authors designate as “standards of treatment”. Survival has nothing to do with quality of life, so it can not “estimate” it.
   Lines 2 to 5 – I don't agree. In 2007 we have a very good idea about the impact of disease and treatment after ICU discharge on critically ill patients, as the authors properly pointed out in the References (see systematic review and metanalysis published by Dowdy et al, in Intensive Care Med in 2005 and 2006). Please explain what you mean by “characteristics of care in the ICU” and by “no feedback” – probably needs English editing.
   Don’t use “morbidity” as if it could be a synonymous of quality of life.
   Line 7 – explain why “particularly in the surgical ICU population” and give a reference.
   Lines 16 to 18 – please re-write or delete because it is not understandable.
   At present time HRQOL is recommended as an outcome measure. Thus authors don’t need to justify it all along the paragraph. Please cite only to the references where HRQOL is recommended if you think that is important, otherwise, you don’t need to justify why you have studied HRQOL.
   Lines 22 and 23 and lines 1 and 2 of page 6 – this is not understandable as at the end of Introduction authors write the aim of the study. Please re-write or delete.
   Page 6
   Line 3 – authors should not start suddenly presenting SF-36 without explaining the reader why. Please re-write. It would be nice to explain briefly the usefulness of questionnaires evaluating HRQOL, in general, and in particular in the ICU setting, and explain briefly the options you had and the choice you did.
   Line 7 – SF-36 was not originally “intended” to be a useful tool for assessing outcome after critical illness. SF-36 has been used and is recommended to be used in the critical care setting. Please re-write.
   Lines 11 to 13- Please explain what the meaning of ADL is and give the original references.
   Lines 17 and 18 – You should indicate that you specifically studied a surgical ICU population. Please explain the difference between determinants and predictors. I don’t understand why you differentiate between determinants and predictors.

Material and Methods
Page 7
Line 3 – patients not returning the questionnaires cannot be “excluded” from the study. They are important for the calculation of the response rate.
Please correct. You should present the response rate in the Results section.
Patients who died in the 6 months follow-up period can not be “excluded” from the study as they were not
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Material and Methods
Line 5 – specify ASA
Line 10 – specify LOS
Line 22 and 23 – currently the word used is “domains” and not concepts. Please re-write.
Give references for SF-36.
Page 8
Line 10 to the end – Please explain the words represented by ADL, as you did previously with SF-36.
Give the original references for ADL.
Page 13 – Discussion
Line 4 – what do you mean by “cut of point”? Please re-write.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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'