Reviewer's report

Title: Nutritional status among older residents with dementia in open versus special care units in municipal nursing homes: an observational study

Version: 2 Date: 30 January 2013

Reviewer: Geir Selbak

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for sending me this revised manuscript

I acknowledge the efforts made by the authors in order to improve the manuscript. Several comments from both reviewers have been met. However, some of the main limitations of the manuscript are still present.

I understand that the main objective of this study is to compare residents in special care units with residents in open units. However, the included patients are required to have dementia or cognitive impairment, which is also reflected in the title of the manuscript. As I stated in my initial review the classification of dementia, and, probably even more so, cognitive impairment is not satisfactory. Patients in special care units will probably have dementia, but if the selection of patients with dementia in open units is inaccurate, the comparison of persons with dementia in two different types of wards may be flawed all the same. Another major limitation is the lack of variable which might have an impact on the main outcome in persons with dementia, such as agitation, level of functioning and level of cognitive impairment. I understand that the authors do not have additional data and are not able to meet my main objection to this study. My conclusion will therefore be unchanged. However, I acknowledge that this is a topic that deserves attention, and as stated in my initial review, the manuscript is well-written. I leave it to the editor to decide whether the limitations described above preclude publication.

Minor comments:

P.4. The average proportion of places in scu in Norway is still wrong. It should be 12/100, not 12/1000.

P.4. I assume the main message from Kirkevold and coworker’s publication in this context is the fact that the proportion of SCU in Norwegian nursing homes has increased from 13.3% in 1996/1997 to 23.8% in 2010/2011.

P.6. In the revised version the authors say that a member of staff gave consent in case the patients lacked the capacity to consent. This is a very unusual procedure. According to Norwegian regulations, a health-worker may not give consent to participation in research on behalf of a patient. If this procedure has been approved by the Regional Ethics Committee, it deserves an explanation.

I find that my other minor objections have been handled in a good way, and I have no further objections.
PS! In my first review the quality of written English was judged as: "not suitable for publication unless extensively edited". This was a misprint as pointed out in an e-mail to the editor shortly after submitting the review.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.