Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors associated with the goal of treatment in the last week of life in older patients: a population-based death certificate survey

Version: 2
Date: 17 January 2014

Reviewer: Klaus Hager

Reviewer’s report:

discretionary revisons:
Some formal points should be changed. In the results chapter table 2 is uncapitalized, whereas table 1 + 3 are written with capital letters. Then the way of citing should be checked. For example in the “Background” chapter several ways can be found: xx.[ ] xx or xx. [ ] xx or xx. [] xx.

minor essential revisions:
1. The title should mention the core question, i.e. if there are differences of treatment goals between old and very old patients. The title might therefore be changed to something like “Factors associated with the goal of treatment in the last week of life in old compared to very old patients: a population-based death certificate survey”

2. In table 1 the mean age of the two age groups should be mentioned.

3. In the discussion of the capacity and the treatment goal (line 247-250) it should be mentioned that there may be a selection bias, because from 1,242 of the 1,681 patients the data were missing.

4. The authors should add a short comment at the end of the discussion concerning the possible consequences of their results, for example that better instruments should be developed to help the treating physicians to define the point when curative treatment should be abandoned, especially in non-malignant diseases or that the principles of comfort therapy should be integrated into the daily decision making, especially in hospitals.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.