Reviewer's report

Title: Physicians’ attitudes about artificial feeding in older patients with severe cognitive impairment in Japan: A qualitative study.

Version: 1 Date: 15 May 2007

Reviewer: Antony Bryant

Reviewer's report:

I was asked to comment on the methodological claims made in this submission.

The authors claim that they have used the Grounded Theory (GT) method, and they refer to the book by Strauss & Corbin. This is only one very specific form of the method, and the research itself only makes minimal use of Strauss & Corbin's approach - so although I would not contest that some attempt to use GT is evident, it is minimal and not really key to the paper's findings or method.

Given that the original work on GT was a study of the terminally ill in a hospice it is surprising that no reference to this work is made - e.g. Glaser & Strauss, Awareness of Dying, 1965.

I leave it to the editors to decide whether or not these weaknesses should be used as a basis of asking for a revision of the paper - but if they do decide that a revision is in order for these or other reasons I would ask that the following points be addressed

- widen the scope of consideration of GT to incorporate some recognition of the early GT works, and other GT approaches
- if Strauss & Corbin's ideas have been used then there should be more evidence of the concepts developed, the axial coding and the relationships between concepts
- the link between Glaser & Strauss’ early studies should be looked at"