Reviewer's report

Title: Delivery of Health Care at the End of Life in Cancer Patients of four Swiss Cantons a retrospective database study (SAKK 89/09)

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Reviewer: Bin Huang

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript reports results of a descriptive epidemiological study of the end-of-life health care delivery for cancer patients in Switzerland. The authors found that the intensity of cancer specific care were associated with age, cancer type, place of residence and insurance type status.

I find the paper is well written with reasonable data analysis. The paper is descriptive in nature. The study population was limited to data from one insurance company. The authors acknowledged the limitation of the data and interpretate the results properly. Given lack of published results in the end of life care for cancer patients in Swiss population, the paper provides valuable information which can be used to aid hypothesis driven studies or researches in this area.

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. There is no standard definition for end-of-life care for cancer patients. Published studies used various inclusion or exclusion criteria to define study populations and outcome variables. I am curious why the current study focused on the cancer related therapies during the last 30 days before death. Why not 3 months which was used in some published studies? Will it make a difference in the results if 3 month is used to define the outcome variable?

2. It would be helpful to include data such as stage at cancer diagnosis or time from date of cancer diagnosis. These data will provide better understanding of health care delivery if they are available and shed lights whether the treatment was given with curative or palliative intent.

3. Cancer therapy is directly connected with cancer type and stage. In my opinion, it would be a cleaner analysis to analyze each cancer separately.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

4. Throughout the manuscript, the 1000 separator appeared as ‘ instead of , .

5. Discussion, paragraph 2

One of the reasons why lower percentages reported for Belgium or the Netherlands was due to different selection criteria. Sudden deaths (35% of total death) were excluded in the referred study.

6. Supplementary table 1 multivariate logistic regression.
The table is confusing. What are the meaning of spline 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b? Better notations or notes are needed.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
  None

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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