Reviewer's report

**Title:** The Development of the Canberra Symptom Scorecard: A Tool to Monitor the Physical Symptoms of Patients with Advanced Tumours.

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 1 December 2003

**Reviewer:** victor chang

Reviewer's report:

*General*

The manuscript is much improved. The authors use a number of techniques from multivariate statistical analysis to derive their conclusions. Their conclusions are important. It would be helpful to have the opinion of a statistician if a sample of 40 patients is adequate.

*Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)*

It is not clear from the methods section if the patients filled out the form by themselves or with the assistance of the staff, or both.

Is this instrument intended primarily for medical oncology patient about to undergo treatment or for palliative care or both? If the former, as in the sample studied here, where half the patients have a good performance status, patients will have fewer symptoms and a shorter instrument is fine. In patients with poor performance status, and multiple symptoms, the Canberra instrument may miss symptoms.

This instrument will be used to study the effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. It is possible that treatment related symptoms may overlap with tumor related symptoms, or will be missed on the Canberra scale.

The authors might consider writing a paragraph on what is known about the symptoms of cough and difficulty remembering.

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

It may be helpful for readers if the authors could write out the names of the instruments in the introduction followed by the acronym in parentheses.

*Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)*

The last paragraph of the Background section belongs in the Discussion.

A semantic issue - tumor related physical symptoms, or common physical symptoms in patients with advanced tumors? Patients with brain tumors have headaches, but headaches are not an item in the Canberra scale.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None