Reviewer's report

Title: Depression and quality of life in cancer patients with and without pain: the role of pain beliefs.

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Reviewer: Julie Bruce

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This is an interesting article and is worthy of publication however there are a number of changes to be made.

2. The introduction is rather lengthy although I am not familiar with BMC Cancer and whether or not this is acceptable. The authors give a historical perspective, the references are mostly from the 1980s and therefore seems to be an old literature they refer to rather than more recent examples. Nevertheless, the background is comprehensive and aims/objectives are clearly described.

3. Methods - my main concern is the definition of cancer pain being 'presence of pain in the last week'. This is not the definition of chronic pain yet there is frequent reference to chronic pain/depression throughout. Was there any distinction during the interview regarding whether or not the pain was from cancer? Or perceived to be from cancer? It may be pain from a non-malignant condition, either acute or chronic.

4. Adequate description of outcome measures. Could have used regression rather than correlational analysis?

5. Results - why just present the global QOL scores for the EORTC and not the domain specific items? It would be more informative for the reader to view the scores for role, physical, emotional etc. particularly as the authors discuss impact of pain at length. Also helpful to present the mean (SD) scores for pain beliefs in Table 2. Final sentence of results doesn't make sense.

6. Discussion - chronic pain is discussed although this study did not look at chronic pain. The definition of pain in the last week does not fulfill the IASP definition for chronicity. There are no limitations or weaknesses discussed in the manuscript - or any discussion of potential biases from the study design, methodology. This needs to be addressed.

Although worthy of publication, the manuscript would be strengthened by updating references with more recent literature and even discussing how QOL/depression/Pain belief scores compare to other data from non-Iranian populations.

Grammatical improvements are required throughout. I have not detailed these here.
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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'