Reviewer's report

Title: Participation of older newly-diagnosed cancer patients in an observational prospective pilot study: an example of recruitment and retention

Version: 1 Date: 8 April 2009

Reviewer: Donald Poon

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The research question defined is a most relevant one and useful for researchers in this field in planning recruitment and retention strategies for studying elderly cancer patients. The authors should be congratulated for reporting this study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The methods are appropriate and described in considerable detail. This facilitates detailed understanding of the methodology used for the benefit of readers doing such research in future studies.

Discretionary Revisions

However for international readers who may not have a good understanding of the treatment facility and workflow in the centers recruiting these patients, a brief description may aid judgment as to whether the methodology applies to their own centers outside of Canada.

In addition, the number and constitution of the research team members may be described along with cost of doing such a study employing the described strategies. This will facilitate resource allocation and amount of funding to be requested for in grant application for other like-minded researchers.

3. Are the data sound?

The data is sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Minor Essential Revisions

There is no necessity to report information already presented in the tables and figure in prose in the main body of the manuscript under the results section. The feedback given by the participants may be tabulated for ease of perusal. The authors may wish to select results they wish to highlight for elaboration in the discussion later.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported
by the data?

The discussion and conclusions are very well articulated. The data presented supported these statements.

Discretionary Revisions

Perhaps an analysis of the baseline functional status of patients and its impact on participation refusal, duration, number of interviews, and postponement of interviews may be more useful compared to an arbitrary age group classification (younger versus older) using median age.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Yes, the limitations are very well described.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Due acknowledgement and a comprehensive relevant referencing have been performed.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes

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

**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'