Reviewer's report

Title: Circumstances surrounding dying in the paediatric intensive care unit

Version: 1 Date: 6 June 2006

Reviewer: Jean-Pierre Revelly

Reviewer's report:

General
Various aspects of the process of care, as well as some indicators of results are presented. They go across specific risks related to the circumstances of PICU admission (day vs. night vs. weekend), the cause of death (natural vs. unnatural), related to neurological, cardiac or multi-organ failure. Some aspects are more related to the process of care, such as the circumstances leading to treatment limitation, and implicit aspects of communication with the next of kin about autopsy authorisation, as well as organ or tissue donation. Overall it is a mixed bag of information, were it is difficult to catch relevant facts susceptible to improve end of life understanding or management.

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

1.- If the authors aim to report factors related to the risk of death, they should provide the incidence in the group of survivor (e.g., number of patients admitted on weekend, or suffering cardiac arrest or multiple-organ failure), to allow for relative risk evaluation.

2.- If it is a qualitative study on the process of treatment limitation that might (or might not) lead to death (qualitative research is extremely appropriate in the end-of-life area), such process should be better described, including who (which people or group of people: doctors, nurses, family) decides, is the family involved, how is the process documented? And finally, what proportion of patients treated with limited care eventually die.

3.- With regard to the autopsies, it might be interesting to know which new information was obtained.

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

none

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

none

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests