Reviewer’s report

Title: Study of Recent and Future Trends in Place of Death in Belgium Using Death Certificate Data: a Shift from Hospitals to Care Homes

Version: 1 Date: 10 November 2010

Reviewer: Christina Bell

Reviewer’s report:

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

Somewhere in the beginning of the paper, "care homes" need to be clearly defined, as in some countries or regions, the term "care home" refers to private homes (often owned by nurses) where a patient pays to live and receive 24 hour domiciliary care with generally fewer services than are provided in a nursing home or intermediate care facility. Thus, in some places, "care homes" are quite distinct from "nursing homes" and it is important to make the definition used by the authors clear, that in Belgium, a care home is a nursing home (long-term care facility).

In the abstract, the first sentence of methods: “Analysis of death certificates (deaths # 1 year)...” is confusing. What does the one year mean? Later in the paper, it appears that the “one year” is indicating that included subjects were all at least one year old at time of death. This should be clarified in the abstract to “Analysis of death certificates (decedents aged # 1 year)...”

The captions for the figures are extremely confusing, as the figures are labeled Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4 below the figures, yet the captions on page 23 refer to Figure 1a, Figure 1b, Figure 1c and Figure 2. Please make sure the captions and the Figure labels correspond to one another. It appears that the first 3 figures could all be combined into one figure showing overall % of deaths by location of death (home, hospital or care home) and not break it up into the living arrangements.

I would like to see another Table with the ORs of the variables included in the regression models for place of death, to clearly see the relationship of the covariates (living situation, age, etc) on the likelihood of dying in a care home.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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