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: 2 Date: 3 February 2011

Reviewer: Christina Bell

Reviewer’s report:

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. A possible future direction is to examine how quality of care at the end of life has changed with the changing place of death. In other words, is the changing place of death a good thing?

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

1. In results, third paragraph, “In all living situations the hospital death rate declined (aged #65 years), and that of care homes death rose.”: This sentence is awkward and should be rephrased. For results, third paragraph, please use “living alone” instead of single for the living situation, it is clearer for the reader, also please change this on Table 4.

2. Discussion paragraph 3, In many countries, this trend was not balanced by an increase in home deaths,[18-20] not even in cancer patients,[11,14,15] because of the ongoing sociodemographic and economic dynamics that caused the hospitalization of death trend in the first part of the century, and the growing availability of other care options for end-of-life care, hospices in some countries and care homes in others. Please remove the “not” from “not even in cancer patients.”

3. Discussion paragraph 3, Since the trend of decreasing hospital death risk of care home residents remained significant after adjusting for available skilled nursing beds in care homes, this trend is not just a consequence of an increase in skilled nursing resources but probably also of the development of palliative care in care homes made possible by the appointment, from 1997, of in-house palliative care reference persons, responsible for supporting, coaching and educating care givers.[9] This is an extremely long and difficult to follow sentence. Please break it up into smaller sentences for the reader to process.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Why on table 4 are the reference variables different for the hospital patients and the care home patients? It makes it hard to compare. Please use the same reference (ie, cancer as reference, youngest age as reference, etc) for both regression models.
**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'