Reviewer's report

Title: Making progress: the role of Cancer Councils in Australia in Indigenous cancer control

Version: 1 Date: 14 June 2013

Reviewer: Kathrin Strasser-Weippl

Reviewer's report:

In their article, Thompson et al report on the progress of Indigenous-related activities of Cancer Councils (CC) in Australia. They provide information on the current state of these activities and compare them to a previous report from 2006. The methods used (semi-structured interviews) are well described and the data are sound. As stated in the “major revisions”, though, quantitative data should be provided whenever available. The limitations of the work are stated, but as indicated below, some more background information would be helpful.

The article is well written and provides extensive information on the subject. The recommendations are structured and detailed and will help to improve the situation of Indigenous people in Australia. The conclusions are very optimistic.

Minor Essential Revisions:

The authors should provide quantitative data where it is available. Phrases like “was not widely appreciated”, or “in some” CCs, or “many CCs”, “many of the respondents”, “many jurisdictions”, “not all respondents” etc. are often used. It would be informative if the authors could provide the corresponding numbers (e.g. “X out of X CCs”, or “Y out of X respondents”).

The authors argue several times that resources are dependent on the size of each CC and the share and absolute number of Indigenous people of this jurisdiction. To underline this, they should provide the number of inhabitants, share and absolute number of Indigenous people for each jurisdiction in table 2.

Some pieces of the “results” should be shifted to the discussion section, as they represent the authors’ opinion and not mere results of the study. These include (e.g.) last paragraph of section “Human Resource Issues”, last sentence of first paragraph of section “Targeted Programs…”, last sentence of first paragraph of section “Accessibility/Extent…”, last sentence of first paragraph of section “Advocacy” and others.

The conclusions drawn seem to be a bit too optimistic. Although there is great effort in addressing Indigenous issues, senior management of CCs still seem to be quite reluctant to take lead in efforts to improve the situation. In addition, although this was already identified as a major issue in 2006, there is still not Indigenous Board member on CCs in 2010. Pointing out this discrepancy between ongoing efforts and measurable success will make the discussion more balanced.
Discretionary Revisions:
For Non-Australians, a short background paragraph would be helpful (share of
Indigenous people and their distribution in Australia, data on cancer outcomes
etc).

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