Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Unbearable suffering in end-of-life cancer patients A cross-sectional study in primary care in the Netherlands

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 23 March 2012

**Reviewer:** stephen workman

**Reviewer’s report:**

This is a well written study examining an important element of end of life care and one that is indirectly relevant to considerations of euthansia and assisted suicide. It should be published. I believe a palliative care journal is the appropriate venue.

Regarding the points 1-9:

Yes to all with one proviso

The title includes the term 'Unbearable suffering'

In the article "unbearable suffering" is defined as :

A subjective experience of suffering that it is so (Omit it?) serious and uncontrollable that it overwhelms one's bearing capacity”

I think overwhelming would be a better title descriptor than unbearable? To my way of thinking unbearable suffering would result in a patient asking to die or to receive euthansia, or want symptom control to the point of being rendered unconscious if necessary—that is death or sedation is a better alternative than an unbearable degree of suffering—as in a level of suffering that cannot be withstood or borne

Conversely, one could argue that overwhelming suffering designates a level of suffering similar to overwhelming but does not carry the same connotation in terms of demanding or implying that there is a desire that relief from suffering be provided at any cost.

**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.