Reviewer's report

Title: Perspectives on care and communication involving incurably ill Turkish and Moroccan patients, relatives and professionals: a systematic literature review

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Reviewer: Jeanine Suurmond

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

In my view this is a paper that addresses an important issue i.e. the perspectives on palliative care as it is experienced by Turkish and Moroccan patients. I believe that insight in these issues is important to improve care by care providers, but also to improve care to carers, such as supporting family members who are in charge of care to the dying person.

In my knowledge there has not been written a systematic literature review before on this subject, and I believe that a systematic literature review may enhance the knowledge about palliative care to Turkish and Moroccan patients, by summarizing the state of the art and/or by pointing out lacunas in knowledge.

I feel that the review is addressing several important points, but I also feel that a few revisions need to be made. My main points concern the discussion session:

-One major point is that despite the paper addresses an important issue, I find the discussion a little disappointing. I read nothing that I did not know before. That is of course one way of conducting a literature review: summarizing what is known. But I would expect a little more from this enormous literature review. The authors have gone through a great effort of reviewing an enormous amount of literature and that is may be why I expect a little more from the conclusions:

(1) In the discussion I missed some comparison between palliative care in Turkey, Morocco and the Netherlands. Could we in the Netherlands learn may be more about practices in Turkey and Morocco? Or could other countries with Turkish and/or Moroccan immigrant populations learn something about the results? Or could Turkish and Moroccan practice learn from the Netherlands? I find the discussion in this respect rather flat. To compare (but also to interpret the studies from Morocco and Turkey) I also would like to have a little more information about the situation of palliative care Turkey and Morocco. For outsiders it may also be relevant to have some information about palliative care in the Netherlands? Perhaps this information could be addressed in a box.

(2) I missed a more concrete goal of the review: Why is it necessary to do this review? What does the review really add in terms of contradicting results,
confirming results etc? In the section Background read that the goal/aim of the review is (in the abstract there is no mentioning of goal or aim by the way) “since the number of patients in these groups needing palliative care will have increased since then (…) we decided to reinvestigate the international literature on Turkish and Moroccan incurable patients”. However, to me it would be more useful to read something more about an aim, apart from the fact that increasing number of patients needing palliative care. There has already been a lot of studies on the issues of immigrant perspectives on palliative care: So could the authors perhaps be a little more clear on what does this review really adds?

To me one important part of this review is the inclusion of Moroccan and Turkish studies, this adds very valuable insights, because we not often have access to these kinds of studies. This aspect makes it for me a valuable review, and should be stressed more in my opinion.

For the Discussion I would be interested to read more about what this review means for daily practice, more than ‘take account of specific cultural characteristics’. And is there also a danger of stereotyping (‘all Moroccan patients want life-prolonging treatment’)? I would be very curious to know.

I also would like to learn what this mean in a methodological way: Which aspects still need exploring, what kind of research do we need? (eg patient perspectives? Other immigrant groups?)

(3) In the method section there are several things that are unclear to me:

- 37 websites were analysed: what kind of websites? Why did the authors make use of these sources, and why did they not just use the usual sources such as Pubmed?

- I missed Appendix 1, but may be I have done something wrong?

- I would include in the section Searches that the authors have searched for qualitative as well as quantitative studies (this is now mentioned in a ‘by the way manner’ under ‘Appraisal of methodological quality’

- Under “Inclusion and exclusion criteria” the searches were done in May 2010. That is 2 years ago. Why did the authors no do a more recent update? Or otherwise could they give an account on why there is a 2 year delay? Or could they make clear that this review is still representing the state of the art?

- Under ‘Appraisal of methodological quality’: by whom was the methodological assessment done? It is common to give initials I believe?

- Under data extraction, analysis and synthesis

How were data of publications classified in themes?

(4) Changes made in the paper should then also be made in the abstract. In the abstract I think it may be useful to include an aim and to be more specific about what this review really adds (see comments above).

- Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.
- In Section Background, second paragraph:
  -what is inadequate palliative care?
  - sentence that start with: ‘Research among Sikh and Muslim patients…:
    seeking professional help. For what? (I assume that they have medical care),
    may be just change into ‘seeking professional palliative care?
-3rd paragraph: could be described in one sentence what specific care needs
  and communication problems are?
  - In Section Background, last sentence:
    This is not completely correct in my opinion. It should be: A Turkish or Moroccan
    background is defined as ‘born in Turkey or Morocco (with at least one parent
    born in Turkey or Morocco) or born outside Turkey or Morocco but having at least
    one parent born in Turkey or Morocco.

In the Result section, under Characteristics of studies included:
- I do not understand the sentence here.
- Table I: could may be an extra column be included on country in which the study
  was executed?

- In Result section under heading Withdrawing or withholding life-prolonging
  treatment:
  Whereas the authors stressed in Background the importance of good palliative
  care to the elderly, here the authors mention one study about palliative care to
  newborns. To me that is a little confusing. Perhaps they could be a little more
  explicit about this (either in background or in results) that palliative care is not
  merely about care to older patients?

- In Result section under heading Perspectives on euthanasia, last sentence:
  Could be described in one sentence (if possible) what euthanasia means in the
  Netherlands?

In Discussion (one paragraph before the last):
- What is VPTZ?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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.