Reviewer's report

Title: The development of an instrument that can identify children with palliative care needs: The Paediatric Palliative Screening Scale (PaPaS Scale) A qualitative study approach

Version: 1 Date: 16 February 2013

Reviewer: Caprice Knapp

Reviewer's report:

This is an excellent study and paper. There are a few comments for the authors to consider.

Introduction- Needs to be a better explanation of why this scale is needed. Needs to be a better review and citations provided of similar scales that exist. In fact most providers will use their clinical judgement regardless of scales, and that needs to be addressed in the introduction.

Major Flaw- the problem with this paper is that no patients/carers were included in the face validity. To disregard them is in error. Many organizations that endorse instrument development now require that consumers be included in this process (PROMISE, NQF). This is a flaw that cannot be fixed at this moment, but is very serious.

Major Flaw- There is some misunderstanding about instrument development in that the participants were asked to comment on cut points (such as below 25). This is erroneous as cut points (or point of minimally important differences) cannot even be established without data. How could cut points even be discussed at this point in the development?

Major Flaw- There is no psychometrician on this paper, nor was one asked to be part of the expert panel. That needs to be addressed.

Who invited the experts? How were they chosen? Were they paid?

Major Flaw- Although this has been addressed as a limitation the expert panel is international, yet the next phase is to trial the instrument out in one hospital. That will be problematic. Again, patients should have already been involved in the study.

Life expectancy- It does not seem as if the concerns of the expert panel were addressed in this domain.

Domain 4- how was the list of symptoms altered?

This instrument will need an accompanying manual otherwise it is unclear how it will "facilitate conversation". Does the interviewer need to be trained in a specific area? Will this be done in person or by paper?
Domain 3- again the scores cannot be modified as the rigor to develop cut points has not even been conducted.

There is mention in the discussion that the tool can be educational. How so? Needs more explanation.

How would the role of the supervisor mitigate bias? That needs to be explained how that happened.

The tables are very confusing. Why not have a column that says changes made in revision 1 and changes made in revision 2 so that the reader can look across the rows and understand the changes.

**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.