Reviewer’s report

Title: Predictors of early transition to palliative level of care among middle cerebral artery ischemic stroke patients and the influence of swallowing dysfunction: a retrospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2013

Reviewer: Agnieszka Ardelt

Reviewer’s report:

This is a retrospective review seeking to evaluate associations with transition to palliative care in the acute setting in patients with middle cerebral artery (MCA) infarcts and swallowing dysfunction. Some points require clarification.

Minor Revisions

1) Since the authors specifically selected patients with MCA infarcts and swallowing dysfunction and excluded patients with MCA infarcts without swallowing dysfunction, care should be taken not to imply that swallowing dysfunction per se (as opposed to the severity of dysphagia) was associated with transition to palliative care. One example of this is the first sentence of the conclusion in the Abstract.

2) Given the issues raised in the Discussion relating to the practice style on the stroke service with respect to weekend/weekday coverage, it is important to discuss the logistics of the stroke service in the Methods. Points to be addressed include who typically performs family discussion on this topic, i.e., the stroke attending vs. the palliative care consultant.

Discretionary revisions

1) If possible, it would be interesting and informative to review the records of family meetings to determine whether discussion of feeding/need for PEG in fact played a role in the palliative care decisionmaking.

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.