Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence and Risk Factors of Depressive Symptoms in a Canadian Palliative Home Care Population: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Author's response to reviews:

January 21, 2014

Re: Manuscript ID #1354524161104392 (2nd Revision)

Attention: Dr. Jane Seymour

We would like to thank the reviewers for their timely review of our revised manuscript. We have addressed the comments on the revised manuscript, which were all from Reviewer 1. The attached letter provides a point-by-point account of how each comment was addressed.

We trust that the revised manuscript has adequately addressed Reviewer 1’s remaining concerns. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

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REVIEWER 1 (LAURA GOODWIN)

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Exclusion of Independent Variables (due to multicollinearity): The reviewer requested more justification for the elimination of variables showing high
multicollinearity. We have provided this justification, which includes conceptual overlap with other variables, statistical associations present in our dataset, and evidence from the literature of established relationships of certain variables with depression (e.g., depression and cognitive impairment, depression and social isolation).

2. Correlation Coefficients: The reviewer suggested choosing either Spearman’s or polychoric correlations, rather than both. We selected polychoric correlations because the current thinking in much of the literature supports their use for ordinal data (e.g., for generating reliability measures and conducting factor analysis). We provide references to support this choice, and have changed the discussion in the “Statistical Analysis” sub-section of the “Methods” section to refer only to polychoric correlations. Examining only polychoric correlations did not change the results in terms of variable pairs exceeding the cutoff.

3. Description of Missing Data Analysis: The reviewer requested clarification of whether “50% of the model runs” was referring to the 50 imputations conducted. Yes it was. We have revised the wording of this sentence, including explicit clarification in parenthesis.

4. Sample Characteristics (Table1): The reviewer questioned whether the sample characteristics should be done on the complete case analysis, given that both complete case (n=3734) and imputed case (n=5144) analyses were done. The sample characteristics were not done on the complete case, but rather on the full sample (n=5144), with the missing items restricted only to the DRS or the specific item involved in the bi-variate analysis reported in Table 1 (as indicated in footnote b). Perhaps the confusion arose because the first sentence in the “Sample Characteristics” referred to the complete case sample and that it was used in the analysis (meaning the regression analysis). We have removed this first sentence to eliminate this confusion.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Conclusions (Abstract): The reviewer suggested that the abstract could be shortened, and wondered whether the conclusions were over-interpreting the data. We have shortened the abstract and re-phrased it to avoid over-interpreting the study’s results.

2. Subheadings in “Measures” section (for interRAI PC items): The reviewer suggested that subheadings be added to aid in reading about interRAI items. Subheadings have been added.

3. Conclusions (Main Report): The reviewer suggested that the “Conclusions” section could probably be shortened. We shortened the “Conclusions” as much as possible.