Reviewer's report

Title: Case conferences general practitioners and specialist teams to plan end of life care of people with end stage heart failure and lung disease: exploratory pilot study

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Reviewer: Stephen Barclay

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I read this paper with interest. It comes from Prof Mitchell’s Australian group who have a well-established track record of high quality research in GP / Palliative Medicine liaison: this excellent paper adds to their impressive publications. I have a few minor comments to make.

Despite small numbers, very impressive results are reported, with considerable statistical and clinical significance. The paper deserves widespread readership.

More could be made of the fact that although all 23 patients were thought to be probably in their last year of life, only 10 died within 12 months and of those only 3 at home. This highlights the problems of prognostication in advanced non-malignant disease that could feature more in the discussion. More discussion around the low home death rate is needed – despite less service utilisation, most still died as inpatients – why might that be?

It would be useful to know a little more detail about the recommendations made, and the key domains that are thought to have influenced such remarkable results. It is puzzling that only 2/3 of recommendations were implemented – does that link with the fact that more than half of patients had not yet reached the very end of life or died, and thus these recommendations were not yet relevant? The paper hints at that.

It is a shame that patients were excluded from these consultations and their voice is entirely absent from this paper – though I note that the subsequent planned trial will include patient-reported outcomes. I would think that would be essential.

The authors might make some minor alterations to their paper in the light of these comments.

I warmly support publication.