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

Version: 1 Date: 1 February 2014

Reviewer: Anna Spathis

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written article, describing the early phases of evaluation of an interesting and potentially clinically important complex intervention. I have no hesitation in recommending that it should be published.

Major Compulsory Revisions: none

Minor Essential Revisions:
- In the abstract method section, it would be helpful to clarify that the patients had non-malignant disease ('lung/respiratory failure' could theoretically be caused by advanced malignant, as well as non-malignant disease).
- The first sentence in the 'participants and case conference process' would fit better in the 'Results' than the 'Methods' section.
- In the penultimate paragraph of the method, it is unclear at what time point (relative to the intervention) the assessment of the rate of uptake of the recommendations is undertaken.
- Under 'case conference recommendations', the phrase 'at the time of the audit' needs clarification as 'audit' has not previously been mentioned.
- The comment that the intervention 'may be cost-effective' in the conclusion has not been mentioned earlier in the article. The likelihood of cost-effectiveness, given the reduction in health service utilisation, could be mentioned in the discussion.

Discretionary Revisions:
- Under 'study objectives', it may be more accurate to state 'case conferences between specialist teams and the GP', as there were both heart/lung service specialists and a palliative care specialist involved.
- It would be helpful to have more information about the 'advanced lung disease patients' (eg 'advanced non-malignant lung disease causing respiratory failure, eg actual diagnosis, such as COPD)
- In the first paragraph of the discussion, the proposed RCT would lead to more valid, as well as generalizable, data.
- The phrase 'specialist based public sector professionals' in the second paragraph of the discussion is hard to understand.
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.