Reviewer's report

Title: Characteristics of a palliative care consultation service with focus on pain in a German university hospital

Version: 2 Date: 17 May 2014

Reviewer: Stefan Wirz

Reviewer's report:

This retrospective investigation delivers interesting data on the German medical system of universities resp. major clinics. It reveals the characteristics of a consultation service enrolling cancer pain patients of surgical and "non-surgical" wards, mostly. The results represent the current German treatment practice and use of analgesics.

Major Compulsory Revisions

- Surprisingly, the frequencies of the consultation rate in both surgical and further wards differed and other findings remained rather unexplainable, e.g. such as the use of non-opioids for breakthrough pain. This may refer to the retrospective design.

- Furthermore, it is unclear whether 'palliative' patients at an advanced stage of their disease with a limited expectation of their life-times or 'non-palliative' patients were enrolled.

- Otherwise, the investigation lacks on the detailed description of adverse effects due to the analgesic therapies.

- There are some 'Germanisms' to be detected in the text. Some of the spelling of the opioids should be corrected.

However, these points should be worth thorough amendment before publication. Otherwise, the topic is interesting and the data provided is useful for the political discussion in order to improve the level of care for such a clientele.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

Speaker's honorarium by Mundipharma Germany, Pfizer Germany, Gruenenthal Germany