Reviewer's report

Title: Choosing care homes as the least preferred place to die: a cross-national survey of public preferences in seven European countries

Version: 2 Date: 15 June 2014

Reviewer: Ebun Abarshi

Reviewer's report:

RE: Choosing care homes as the least preferred place to die: a cross-national survey of public preferences in seven European countries

This is a well-written manuscript that provides comparisons on an important and topical issue. It is interesting that hospitals and care homes are more frequently rated similarly by respondents from seven countries in Europe: perhaps these two facilities share a lot more in common?

A challenging aspect of such a cross-cultural study is how to find the most appropriate/suitable term to apply in different languages, but the authors have obviously done a good job with that.

In the study, random data were pooled from different parts of the EU population (diversity), which indeed is one strength of the methodology applied. However, differences in the care culture, arrangement and methods of funding/health insurance, as well as personal experiences of people dying in care homes, access, and availability of hospital beds; are factors that require mention within a European context, even if they were not explicitly explored.

A- General comments
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes
3. Are the data sound? OK
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes

B- Major Compulsory Revisions
In terms of context, the insertion of a section or paragraph that defines /describes what a “care home” implies is likely to improve the readability and comprehensibility of this paper, given its broad coverage.

In the ABSTRACT conclusion: Our results suggest it might be difficult to promote care homes as a good place to live. . . was this aspect also explored explicitly in this survey? One wonders how the authors have come to this conclusion. Again this implies that the use of “care homes” is not quite the same in different contexts (i.e. in sickness versus in health).

In sum, one is missing a more robust/critical discussion/explanation around data collected from some of the countries (UK, Italy and Spain). In the UK, long term use of care homes is relatively common (sheltered, private, regular, luxurious and the like) but the respondents chose it as the second least preferred place of death – what does this imply in terms of planning long term care? Finally does this study suggest that respondents would rather live elsewhere when they are older or was it again only limited to having a serious illness?

C- Minor Essential Revisions.

1. Results/ line 286: To “discriminate” people, is this an appropriate term? Perhaps you could use “differentiate”?

2. Discussion / line 295: . . . .the first or the second (most common) least preferred place to die.

3. Discussion / line 298: Public views have been found to generate good quality clinically relevant research (please provide a reference for this statement)

4. Table 2 Line 591: typo
Diagnosed with serious illness in last 5 years

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests