Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence and changeability of explicit requests for euthanasia in a palliative care hospital

Version: 3 Date: 19 August 2014

Reviewer: Melanie M Smith

Reviewer's report:

There are no Major Compulsory Revisions

Minor Essential Revisions

1. There is a grammatical error in the second sentence of the methods section of the abstract. It should read “an euthanasia-like practice.”

2. In the third paragraph of the background, there are two periods at the end of the first sentence.

Discretionary Revisions

3. In the first paragraph of the Background, the article states that there is an impression that caregivers are rarely confronted by euthanasia requests. I believe this is referencing the third citation but it isn’t completely clear. I simply think it should be more explicit. Who are the caregivers and what is the origin of this impression?

4. In the Discussion section, the first paragraph entitled “Persistent of inpatients’ request for euthanasia,” does not address whether or not the response to these requests influences persistence. The previous paragraph briefly mentions that doctors’ attitudes may influence demands. Doctors’ attitudes may also influence persistence. If a doctor’s attitude could influence a patient’s request, couldn’t legality and availability of euthanasia also influence patient requests for euthanasia and the persistence of these requests? Perhaps in a country where physician-assisted-suicide is legal, the request would be more persistent as the patient would get a favorable response from the caregiver.

5. I believe table 1 lists all of the search terms but it is far from exhaustive, for instance it doesn’t contain terms like “end my life” or “kill myself.” This could lead to significant under-reporting of all three categories and should be addressed in the discussion.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.