Reviewer's report

Title: In the shadow of bad messages - Reactions of patients with acute leukaemia, myeloma or lung cancer to bad messages in different phases of their disease.

Version: 1 Date: 20 July 2006

Reviewer: Lidia Schapira

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I would recommend to the authors that they strongly consider changing the title and to replace 'bad messages' with the more often employed English phrase 'bad news'. For those who are interested in the field, the expression 'bad news' is familiar and thus will guarantee a broader readership.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

page 4. replace "when death is coming close" with "when death is near"

page 4: statistics for survival for NSCLC are dire and perhaps can be updated?

Page 7: it would be useful to see a table in order visualize how the patients were distributed among these 4 groups.

Page 10-13: In the discussion section I would like the authors to address the fact that their interviews were heavily weighted towards the earlier phases of illness and in fact a very small number of patients were actually interviewed as they deteriorated or were near death.

The discussion is otherwise very thoughtful and makes a very strong case for patient centered or patient driven care - that is, the need to satisfy the information needs of patients along the trajectory of the illness experience and adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

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

Statistical review: No