Reviewer's report

Title: General Practitioners' use and experiences of palliative care services: a survey in South East England.

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2008

Reviewer: David Seamark

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This paper describes a straightforward questionnaire of GPs' experiences of local palliative care services. The response rate was a commendable 69% of useable returns. There are a few problems with the data. Retrospective estimate of palliative care cases cared for are notoriously unreliable and not too much store should be placed on these results. Certainly I do not think that statistical analysis of these figures is justified. The other problem relates to treating the two hospice services separately. It is a small survey and one has to ask: what is the point of comparing the two services? It would be better to combine the figures for Hospice A and Hospice B. It would help to have a description of the two hospice services in terms of community services, inpatient beds, day care and 24 hour availability of cover/advice.

The results concerning communication and prescribing practices are helpful and should be the main thrust of the paper. The discussion is currently too long and speculative. The conclusions were nicely written.

Overall I feel the paper needs minor revision to make it a shorter tighter paper. I would suggest omitting details of palliative care cases cared for and the statistics attached to that, combining data for the two hospices and reducing the speculative content of the discussion.