Reviewer's report

Title: Information by physician and retention of information by patients - Obstacles to the awareness of patients of progressing disease when life is near to an end.

Version: 3 Date: 12 November 2007

Reviewer: renea beckstrand

Reviewer's report:

General

Thank you for letting me review this study. I was very interested in this topic and enjoyed reading the results of their work. I thought it was methodologically sound and that their interpretations of the subjects words were correctly interpreted and not over analyzed. The article made me think of the differences between being aware and being informed. I had not thought of the differences in those two ideas before.

There were several times that the author's analysis of their data really presented interesting information. One example would be on page 10 where they note that patients seem to accept gratefully every opportunity offered by doctors to "forget" the future". Very interesting idea.

I also thought the limitations section was honest and well written.

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

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

1. I would ask the authors to make revisions in the article so that it reads as past tense rather than switching from present tense to past tense, i.e., on page 2..."The aim of this study is to follow", rather than was to follow...." or on page 3, "The study consists of recurrent interview" rather than consisted since the study is completed.

2. There are also some spelling errors (pg 1 at bottom, malign... rather than malignant). Words such as "fortnight" are not used in the U.S. and I'm not sure what a fortnight is...could this be ammended to be more clear for a broad English speaking audience? Also on page 12, "revivals" of lung cancer? Does that me return of lung cancer?

Other than perhaps making it a little shorter, I have no other suggestions to the authors. Thank you for completing this research.
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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.