Author's response to reviews

Title: Out-of-hours palliative care provided by GP co-operatives: availability, content and effect of transferred information.

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Responses to reviewers’ comments

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Title:
Out-of-hours palliative care provided by GP co-operatives: availability, content and effect of transferred information.

Reviewer 1

The authors have responded to my questions satisfactorily. The statistics on Table 5 need further explanation.

Response

We prepared a new Table 5 and described the Table in methods and results.

Reviewer 2

The attribution of causality of information availability and referral to hospital is speculation on your part and not soundly supported by the evidence.

Response

We agree with the reviewer as we stated in Strength and Weaknesses: “From the results of this cross-sectional study we can not determine whether there is a positive relationship between less hospital referrals and the transfer of information.”

Reviewer 3

If I understand correctly, the abstract should say that information was transferred by GPs on 25.5% of palliative care patient calls to the co-op: not 25.5% of GPs' palliative care patients (most would not have made a call).

In table 4, numbers are required for each subsection under Information Transferred in order for the reader to understand the percentages.

Just a couple of points to think about - if GPs transfer information about all palliative care patients, this will need constant updating as symptoms change - and it is understandable perhaps why they don't and it more often occurs in the terminal phase.

Response

This is correct. We changed this in the abstract.

Response

We added the numbers in Table 4

Response

We do agree. Constant updating is a lot to ask from a GP and will occur indeed more frequently in the terminal phase.
One reason for lack of diagnosis and info transfer for the oldest patients maybe the complexity of conditions and comorbidities.

We agree and added this argument in our discussion

Reviewer 4

1. Statistical presentation:
Had difficulty in following throught and understand the sections on Methods and Results, partly because of poorly written.
Layout of the tables and accuracy of the numbers are poorly presented which requires further improvements.
2. Logistics regression analysis:
Apart from presenting the adjusted results obtained from logistic regression model, unadjusted results should also be included so as to compare and help understand what were contribution of each respective covariates used.
Apart from presenting p-values and Wald Statistics, 95%CI should also be included.
Regarding the model’s adequacy, only the “Chi2” was presented at the bottom of the Table 5, no furthe explanation and comment was made anywhere of the text.
Levels of covariates used in the logistic model should be clearly described, e.g. which variables are continuous, which ones are categorical? if it is a categorical variable, what was the reference group used?

Response

We changed the lay-out of the tables and added numbers where required.

We added the unadjusted odds ratio’s with 95%CI in Table 5.

Regarding the model’s adequacy we added the Nagelkerke R-square , both in the text and in Table 5.

We described in the text the variables in more detail and added reference groups for categorical variables.