Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 3 April 2009

Reviewer: Larry Librach

Reviewer's report:

1. The questions are reasonably clear but I am not sure the study actually answered the questions particularly whether information transfer actually impacted care provided by the locum.

2. I found the analysis confusing. First retrospective chart audits are always fraught with difficulty. No indication from the authors that the information they sought was part of every encounter. A comparison with non-palliative care patients would answer that question. Perhaps information was only transferred in 25% of other calls as well.

3. Although a p value is stated as significant, the chance for error because the numbers are so small in the group sent to hospital is great and may not be clinically significant especially since we do not know whether those sent to hospital were sicker in the first place.

3. Indeed the numbers of calls from palliative patients was quite small and did not include non-cancer patients with other terminal illnesses.

4. The link to "improvement in end of life care" as stated in the last recommendation is really without proof from the study. It may have been very appropriate to send people to hospital.

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests