Reviewer’s report

Title: Policies to improve end-of-life decisions in Flemish hospitals: communication, training of health care providers and use of quality assessments.

Version: 2 Date: 18 August 2009

Reviewer: MARIA J SILVEIRA

Reviewer’s report:

Authors have done a nice job of addressing questions raised in my last review. RECOMMENDED CHANGE: The introduction is much improved but could be better. I would drop the first sentence in paragraph 2, and focus the paragraph on providing more details on the 1994 and 2005 surveys of Flanders hospitals and expand on why it is important to see if the 2005 numbers 'are stable or growing.' Say something about the numbers of euthanasias that have occurred during the interim to motivate the reader - Something like "In Flanders xxx people die each year from euthanasia and countless others die after withholding or withdrawing care - it is important to know if hospitals have developed processes to ensure that these practices occur in an ethical and humane manner..."

I like the attempt to include some of the content in euthanasia policies (pg 6) - to whatever extent you can put in more of that, I think your piece will be more interesting.

DISCRETIONARY CHANGE: since you asked the same questions (or almost the same) of the same population in 1994, 2005, and 2007 why not compare trends over time? Could you conduct a survival analysis to determine the characteristics of the hospitals which were 'early adopters' in comparison to those who were 'late adopters' of EOL policies? This might be something to explore for another paper.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests