Reviewer's report

Title: Dying from cancer or other chronic diseases in the Netherlands: ten-year trends derived from death certificate data

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Reviewer: Tsung-Hsueh Lu

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Major Compulsory Revisions

In contrast to previous studies which confined to cancer deaths or total deceased, this study included selected chronic diseases to estimate possible needs of palliative care. The authors said “Yet we based our study on a selection of people who had died from causes that are almost always preceded by a period of sickness and thus with (a need for) palliative care.” (Page 11, paragraph 2, sentence 3) The argument proposed by authors was too categorical. According to my clinical experience many of the patients with diagnoses selected by the authors died from acute episodes (e.g., COPD patients died from acute pneumonia and sepsis or diabetes patients died from acute myocardial infarction), who were not preceded by irreversible functional impairment and needed palliative care.

The authors should give detail accounts on how they selected the chronic diseases listed in table 1. The percentage of deaths that needs palliative care must be different by diagnoses and age groups. The authors should cite more relevant papers to support the estimation. The authors did a good job for stroke deaths and suggested that only 67% of all stroke deaths were selected as non-acute based on one empirical study [Ref 17]. I also read that paper but did not know how “67%” was derived.

Authors might use the “sequelae” codes, such as

B90 Sequelae of tuberculosis
G09 Sequelae of inflammatory diseases of central nervous system
I69 Sequelae of cerebrovascular disease

In these categories, the percentage of deaths needs palliative care must be higher.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. I suggest the authors focus more on the comparisons between 1996 and 2006, which are the main points of this paper and more interested to readers.
2. The authors could use more tables instead of figures because the tables could communicate exact figures.
3. With regard to the concordance between death certificate data and data in medical records (page 11, paragraph 1, sentence 3), the authors could refer to
the following two papers.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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'