Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 6 October 2008

Reviewer: Robert Anderson

Reviewer's report:

This is a much improved manuscript and the authors have addressed most of my concerns. There are still a few that remain, however.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. I understand what the authors are trying to do with regard to the division of stroke deaths into acute and non-acute categories. However, I do not see any justification for dividing this 1/3 and 2/3. This division seems completely arbitrary. In the absence of any empirical evidence, I would rather see all stroke deaths included and then some discussion to the effect that this is clearly an overestimate, but we don't know how to appropriately apportion the deaths into acute and non-acute components. This is essentially what the authors have done with some of the other causes that have acute and non-acute complications, eg, ischemic heart disease.

2. The selection of diseases section (pp. 11-12) needs to be edited for clarity. In particular, more explanation is needed with regard to the Alzheimer’s disease problem. Eg, why can’t G30 be included? As it is written, this part is quite confusing.

3. p. 14, 2nd paragraph - the authors state that the real cause of death can only be proven by autopsy. While that is often true, it is not always true. Sometimes, autopsy cannot elucidate the underlying cause.

4. p. 14, 3rd paragraph - Change "As the ICD-10 is always used when death certificates are filled out..." to "As the ICD-10 is always used when death certificates are coded..."

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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