Reviewer's report

Title: 'Palliative care': a contradiction in terms? A qualitative study among cancer patients with a Turkish or Moroccan background, their relatives and care providers

Version: 3 Date: 25 March 2010

Reviewer: Jocie Ellis

Reviewer's report:

Proposed decision: Major revisions.

Review comments for authors:

This is an interesting paper that explores the concept of “good” palliative care in Turkish and Moroccan patients and shows how this conflicts with the concept “good” palliative care that underpins the practise of Dutch health care providers.

In the background section there is some reference made with regards to others studies which focus on Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan patients. However, no detail is given about these studies and how the present study sits in relation to these studies. More information in this regard would help to contextualise the study in terms of the literature and also help justify the need for the study.

The paper would also benefit from a greater justification as to why the patients from these particular backgrounds were chosen for the study. The paper also needs to be state whether ethical approval was gained for the study (and who provided this and when). The paper would also benefit from information regarding when the research was conducted. It also requires references to support the use of oral consent.

The information regarding the research population and the interviews was very confusing and contradictory. This section needs to state very clearly who the interviews were with (patients, care-providers or family members) and provide a more detailed breakdown of the family members (as you have done with the care providers). The table provided is also confusing as some of the figures provided in the totals appear not to match those in the text. The paper would also benefit from more detailed information regarding the questions asked during the interviews (Were they all participants asked the same question? Was an interview guide used?). The paper also needs to state the theoretical and methodological frameworks that were used for the study. The study also lacks a detailed description of the analytical process (what was done, when it was done, why it was done and by whom). The credibility of the findings will be enhanced by being explicit about this process.

Regarding the findings, there needs to be a short discussion related to the overall themes of the study. This will help to put what appears to be the main finding of the study into context with the broader findings. In terms of the discussion, there need to be more discussion of the findings in relation to the literature, particularly
in terms of the implications for care provision for patients from these particular ethnic backgrounds. The results are very interesting and will help to broaden our understanding of the importance of what is perceived to be ‘good palliative care’ in these different cultural contexts. However, the paper needs to be more explicit as to what the findings mean for practice and research.