Reviewer’s report

Title: European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) framework for palliative sedation: a critical appraisal

Version: 1 Date: 2 June 2010

Reviewer: Bert Broeckaert

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The article overstresses the unity of the texts that according to them constitute "the EAPC framework" on sedation. The origin, intention and status of each of the texts discussed is very different. For this reason it would be better, for each of the different items you want to discuss, to make a detailed and strict comparison of each of the texts (and it would be better to limit the number of texts you want to compare).

2. There are very few references to the rather large literature on sedation (including specific articles on the issues you want to discuss) in your text. In this way you isolate the papers you discuss from the (scientific) context in which they have been written. See a.o. Claessens ea in Journal of Pain and Symptom Management for an overview of the clinical studies. This paper should include more references to the wider (and already much older) discussion (e.g. the discussion on slow euthanasia; the definition; the terminology of sedation; the life-shortening effect of sedation; food and fluids...) and thus put the papers discussed here into perspective.

3. The paper would be stronger if it would address fewer issues regarding sedation but discuss them more in depth; now it discusses each of the issues rather superficially.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. background: specify which texts you are referring to when you write 'those published on EAPC's official website'

2. the decision to withhold or withdraw nutrition and hydration is a different decision than the one to sedate. You are essentially talking about two separate decisions. Your discussion is not clear on this.

3. euthanasia does intend death; sedation does not (and usually doesn't have a life-shortening effect either) - these are important differences. Of course physicians do not perform euthanasia because they enjoy killing their patient but because they want to relieve unbearable suffering. But that is not enough to conclude that the intention of both acts is identical.

Though I am not impressed by the article in its present form and though the
argumentation offered does not convince me (but this is not the reason not to accept the article in its present form), I think that after a serious revision this challenging article can be accepted.

**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