Reviewer's report

Title: A proposed systems approach to the evaluation of community-based integrated palliative care

Version: 1 Date: 19 February 2010

Reviewer: Larry Librach

Reviewer's report:

A couple of issues that the authors may want to consider:
1. The individual patient and family characteristics often have a great deal to do with outcomes. This is really not mentioned anywhere.
2. Organizational commitment is as important as leadership in networks. The ability to accept co-dependence is often not there.
3. There is an economic advantage to avoiding network cooperation especially in the Canadian (Ontario) situation.
4. The network model may not produce the best outcomes. The best model may be a single organization or program covering a region where organizational boundaries and policies do not take effect. That of course still requires an interprofessional team that works well! The US hospice care home programs have shown that that model works extremely well. The network model also depends on government unwillingness to force organizations together. Just having a network does not guarantee good care and the analytical structure proposed does make some good sense.
5. A quibble. Family medicine has spoken about patient centred care since the early 50s. I believe it was much later before others jumped on that issue.
6. Overall I liked the article but I wonder whether the complexity of the model proposed will inhibit network development. It would have been good for the authors at some point to have defined key priority issues in network function and outcomes.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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