Reviewer's report

Title: Inapplicability of advance directives in a paternalistic setting: the case of a post-communist health system

Version: 4 Date: 23 May 2011

Reviewer: Leslie Whetstine

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions:

Summary page 2:
A. Since forgo means to either withdraw or withhold treatment, it should read to either avoid institutional treatment or forgo institutional treatment but not both as it's a double negative.
B. Are withholding cures ever senseless? Withholding senseless treatment perhaps, but cures are universally regarded as good things to be sought.

Page 3:
A. Paramedics not paradmedicals
B. Condensation is the wrong word choice-scenario or a similar word is needed.
C. 94 year old, not years old.

Page 4:
A. the case entered the impasse of a futile treatment: should read the case became an example of futile treatment
B. The authors state repeatedly that Albanian law leaves no option to deny treatment and doctors are legally obligated to provide it up to the point of rigor mortis. Thus, the fact that the 94 year old man’s verbal request to die at home wasn’t witnessed or validated wasn’t why he was treated, he was treated due to the constraints imposed by law. Even if someone witnessed the patient’s request, if the law merely provides an article regarding the approval of treatment requested by the patient but doesn't recognize refusal why would it matter who witnessed his request if it won’t be carried out? Please clarify.

Page 5:
A. Please define third age persons

Page 6:
A. I'm not sure that engraved is the right word in this context
B. Dislocate is not the right word in this context.

Page 7:
A. Isn't it possible that relatives are opting for treatment even when suffering is unbearable because the law doesn't offer any other option—would relatives think it even possible to request to forgo treatment? Please clarify.

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.