Reviewer's report

Title: The ethical decisions UK doctors make regarding advanced cancer patients at the end of life - the perceived (in) appropriateness of anticoagulation for venous thromboembolism: A qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 23 June 2012

Reviewer: Suzanne Kosmider

Reviewer's report:

To the authors- an intersting qualitative study that explores end of life clinician decision making in people with VTE and advanced cancer in an area where there is a paucity of data and published literature.

It is well written, the discussion and conclusions are adequately supported by the data. Limitations of the work clearly stated

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Although detail is provided regarding the participants of the interview (age, specialty, geographic location and institution type) it would be useful to obtain background details of how they were originally identified for the phase 1 component and the number of years working in their field.

2- Is there a correlation between the length of time practised and the decision to / or not to institute anti-coagulation with Sx DVT/ Sx PE?

3. According to the physicians interviewed; how important / relevant was involving the patient and patient's family in the decision making process for instituting / not commencing LMWH?

4- Some more exploration of the ethics of (not) involving the patient in the decision making process given the findings of reference 15.

5- Defining "end of life" (ie life expectancy in weeks) or using a scenario providing the patient's ECOG PS would have removed some ambiguity around these issues. Why was this strategy not chosen for the interview?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'