Reviewer's report

Title: Patients Attitudes Toward Advance Planning in Japan: How to Respect Patients Best Interests.

Version: 1 Date: 15 May 2006

Reviewer: Todd Elwyn

Reviewer's report:

General
[I will summarize most of my comments here as there are no major defects that require correction.]
The manuscript is of particular interest to those who have observed the evolution of medical ethics in Japan. Japan, as an advanced nation, has been strongly influenced by Western notions about bioethics and patient autonomy. The manuscript notes that Japanese society is changing toward embracing these notions, but the traditional values persist and paternalistic practices continue. In this context, I found the survey to be well-done and informative of the preferences of a cross-section of those living in Tokyo. One may argue that the attitudes of those in Tokyo may not be representative of most Japanese (somewhat like surveying New Yorkers and assuming the results would represent Americans generally). The work builds upon what has been done in this area in the past. The response rate was acceptable (particularly for a 12-page questionnaire.)

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The manuscript contains a number of spelling and/or grammatical errors. For example, the first sentence of the abstract reads, "Japanese people become increasingly interested in the expression and enhancement of their individual autonomy in medical decisions made at end of life." This should be corrected to read something like, "Japanese people have become increasingly interested...made at the end of life." These errors detract from readability and should absolutely be corrected before publication.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Adding a few more comments that place the survey results in the context of a changing Japanese society would be interesting. For example, has anyone attempted to introduce legislation on this issue? A few more details about the status of this issue would be appreciated. Also, a sentence explaining why Japanese physicians do not give priority to patients' wishes (or what they do give priority to) would be helpful for the reader.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

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