Reviewer's report

Title: Attitudes and behaviors of Japanese physicians concerning withholding and withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment for end-of-life patients: Results from an Internet survey

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2007

Reviewer: Noritoshi Tanida

Reviewer's report:

General:
Currently, not only the general public and doctors but also ethicists and lawyers believe that the acts of withholding and withdrawing are different in Japan. In addition, people hold a great value on eating and drinking. This study demonstrated these Japanese feelings convincingly by hard data. Japan needs step by step approach of such objective studies for rational end-of-life care.

Although minor revisions may be necessary as shown below, they are mostly technical matters. I think this study is worthwhile to be published on BMC Medical Ethics.

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Major Compulsory Revisions: none

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Minor Essential Revisions:
ABSTRACT: at the Results section, figures “10%” and “OR, 4.6; 95% CI, 2.0–10.7” are different from original Table 2 and 3.

METHODS: at the first paragraph, page 7, line 3, the word “etc” seems unnecessary. Also at the first paragraph, perhaps authors had better show how many physicians are on each mailing list so that readers may have a rough idea of populations.

RESULTS, the first paragraph (page 11): it says “two responses were regarded as duplicate responses; these were deleted.” However, according to the METHODS the first access of duplicates would have been included in analysis. Then, a total number for analysis should have been 305. Also, summing up of %s does not reach at 100 (99 – 101) in some parameters described here and Table 1. Recalculation may be necessary.

RESULTS, page 12 to 14: Table 3 should have been read as Table 2.

RESULTS, the upper paragraph of page 14: some figures are different from the corresponding Table.

RESULTS, page 16: Table 2 should have been read as Table 3. The next line, “treatment should “should be withheld” in Case 1” has missed some words or just repetition of “should”? At the lower paragraph, figures “OR, 4.6; 95% CI, 2.0–10.7” are different from the corresponding Table.

TABLES: Number the tables consecutively. And summing up of %s does not reach at 100 (99 – 101) in some parameters of Table 1. Please clearly indicate which are “reference categories” in analysis of current Table 2, not simply showing with “vs.”

Discretionary Revisions: none

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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 declare that I have no competing interests.