Reviewer's report

Title: Discussing life expectancy with surgical patients: Do patients want to know and how should this information be delivered?

Version: 1 Date: 10 March 2008

Reviewer: Aloysius Siriwardena

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

Overall this was a well written study of patients' knowledge and perceptions of life expectancy information and its presentation. The paper was well set out and the results clearly presented in the results section, tables and figures.

It was unclear initially that this was standardised information relating to a specific patient scenario and not data related to the patient themselves, although this was explained in the discussion. It would help if this was clarified in the abstract and at the end of the background.

It was unclear what type of subjects were recruited and why they were recruited in the way that they were. LE/SP is really most relevant to patients with cancer or other diagnoses affecting LE/SP. The participants' diagnosis may have affected their desire to know and therefore it would be helpful to clarify this in the abstract, methods and discussion.

In a ‘real world’ situation the interpretation of LE/SP information would be probably be used to support explanation rather than in place of it with written information clarified by discussion with a clinician. It was not clear whether this was available to participants. I was not clear what role the investigator had when present with patients completing the questionnaire. If not, this should be listed under study limitations.

Minor essesntial revisions

Results Section 4 3rd line should be 'first' insetad of 'fist'.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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.