Reviewer’s report

Title: The use of rehabilitation among patients with breast cancer: A retrospective longitudinal cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 29 March 2012

Reviewer: Karen Robb

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

1) Please clarify the process that was used for peer review/scientific review of this study

Minor essential revisions:

2) The first sentence of the conclusion in the abstract is grammatically poor and requires revision

3) page 2: line 17: I disagree with the suggestion that the concept of cancer rehabilitation is new, it has been around for a very long time but is gaining increasing recognition, mostly due to the 'survivorship agenda'. Refer to some of the papers by Gilchrist, particularly A framework for assessment in oncology rehabilitation (2009). Physical Therapy 89(3): 286-306.

4) line 19 to avoid ambiguity, change 'therapies' to 'medical treatment';

5) line 20: lymphoedema is one word; line 24:

6) physical activity and exercise is very topical currently and has been shown to both improve QOL and functioning but also appears to have a survival benefit, I feel referencing this literature will give weight to your introduction. See Holmes et al (2009) physical activity and survival after breast cancer diagnosis. JAMA 293(20): 2479-2486.

7) page 4: lines 10-11: in most countries, nutrition and dietetics is included as rehabilitation, please clarify if this is provided as a rehabilitation service in Taiwan.

8) page 6: lines 9-10: clarify whether the figures you quote for prevalence of arm/shoulder pain relate to the articles you reference or your study. It is currently not clear.

9) Lines 12-14: it is not clear what 'related complication rate' is.

10) Line 15: I think the reference to article 16 should go after 'countries' on line 15

11) Lines 18-21: there needs to be explanation of why EARLY Intervention with rehabilitation is important and an emphasis that many of the barriers that are quoted e.g fatigue, psychosocial issues, are perfect reasons to refer to rehabilitation services.

12) Line 25-26: can you provide a reference
13) Lines 27-28: not sure what you mean by 'mutual aid groups'
14) page 7: lines 6-7: clarify when the 'golden time' is and why
15) page 8: conclusion needs a rewrite as the grammar is poor

Discretionary revisions

16) For an overview of UK evidence based rehabilitation pathways which you may want to refer to and reference in your introduction see: www.ncat.nhs.uk and go to 'living with and beyond cancer' and then 'cancer rehabilitation'
17) another useful reference showing importance of early physiotherapy to prevent lymphoedema is: Lacomba et al. 2010 in the BMJ.

Thank you

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

**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.