Reviewer's report

Title: Death certificate completion skills of hospital physicians in a developing country

Version: 3 Date: 13 February 2013

Reviewer: Jesus Villar

Reviewer's report:

GENERAL COMMENTS

The manuscript has been revised accordingly to the concerns expressed by the reviewers. However, more information is needed to clarify some relevant issues.

Front page:
• Please, confirm the order of authorship. In the response to reviewers, the first author is K. Shamim; however, in the revised manuscript, the first author is A.S. Haque.
• Please, specify academic degrees (MD, PhD, others), and all professional affiliations of authors [hospital/institutional Department(s), name of the hospital, city, country].

Abstract Page
• Please, in the Methods section, specify that this is a retrospective study with the aim to examine and analyze the accuracy of death certificates from patients who died during a 6-month period (please, state the exact dates) in a teaching hospital in Pakistan.
• Please, it is important to mention in the Methods section of the abstract that errors in the certification of death were classified into six categories, from 0 to 5 with increasing type of errors: a grade 0 was assigned if no errors were identified, and 5, if an incorrect cause of death was attributed or placed in an improper sequence.
• There is no need to refer to the use of SPSS in the abstract.
• In the Results section of the abstract, please indicate the total number of deaths during the study period, the total number of completed death certificates, the total number of excluded certificates, and the total number of final certificates included for analysis.
• In the conclusions paragraph, indicate that the “alarming” high error rate is attributed to the ideal appropriate completion of death certificates. As written, the sentence is incomplete.

Introduction
• What do you mean by the term “personal particulars”?
Methods

• Please, expand the first paragraph of the Methods section with some relevant information related to your hospital: number of beds, nature of the hospital (teaching, university, multidisciplinary, non-trauma, maternal, pediatric, etc.), number of hospital admissions during the year or the study period, number of deaths/year during the study period, patient population under study (men, women, children).

• What is “Performa”?

• Please, in the third paragraph, use “relevant information from medical records” instead of “relevant medical laboratory and radiological records”.

• Instead of “assessor”, use the term “investigator”.

• Table 1 should be place at the end of the manuscript, together with the rest of Tables.

• Please, modify the Statistical analysis paragraph. Explain in detail what exactly you counted, measured, and analyzed. The reference to the use of SPSS should be placed at the end of the paragraph followed by the degree of significance you used (normally, p<0.05), if appropriate.

Results

• I have understood that in 185 certificates, an error was found regarding patient’s age, patient’s name, date of birth, missed physician’s name. Is that correct? If affirmative, the reading of the sentences, as written, is not clear.

Discussion

• In the third paragraph, please use the term “reported” instead of “discovered”.

• There is no need to abbreviate the term “death certificate” as DC.

References

• Please, follow the Journal style for references.

• In Ref. #1, the PubMed name of the journal is Health Serv Res.

• Do not include the month or day of publication when referencing the date of the publication.

• Do not include the number of issue after citing the volume number.

• In some references you have included the last page with all digits and in others you only included the final digit of the page.

• In Refs. #17, 18, and 19, the year of publication is missing.

• Please, confirm the first and last pages of Ref. # 19.

• Pages of Ref. #34.

• Please, try to include some reports related to death certification that have been published in Health Serv Res during 2011 and/or 2012.
Tables
• In Table 2, the legend should say “Number and percent of errors in 202 death certificate by different grading”.

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