Reviewer’s report

Title: Predictors of mortality among elderly dependent home care patients

Version: 3 Date: 24 November 2012

Reviewer: Claudio Bilotta

Reviewer’s report:

I appreciate the Authors have better clarified in the revised text that previous hospital admissions were considered among covariates.

Major compulsory revisions

1) It is still not clear in the text and tables if several variables associated with death at univariate analyses were actually included in the multivariate analyses: cognitive status, health-related quality of life, having a care-giver (data about this variable are available for all 1001 participants), Barthel index, some health services received in the year before basal assessment such as teleassistance, after hours emergency community services, health centre emergency services. These variables should be included in multivariate analyses and their results should be shown in Table 6. Moreover, it might be interesting to perform another multivariate analysis – including the Zarit test among covariates - on the sub-sample of the 821 participants having a care-giver.

2) Again, Conclusions in the Abstract (‘home care programs for EDPLH patients should aim at preventing pressure ulcers and unnecessary hospital admissions’) as well as the Discussion (in particular page 8 paragraph starting with ‘In the light of the above findings we would recommend key lines of actions…’) should be completely re-written since are absolutely not supported by the study findings. This study could not assess the effectiveness of any intervention aimed at preventing pressure ulcers, hospitalizations and death of participants. This observational study only identified independent characteristics that predicted the risk of death at a one-year follow-up, without considering some possible confounders such as malnutrition, frailty syndrome, severity of comorbidity as previously explained. This should also be better discussed among the limitations of the study.

Minor essential revisions

1) As clearly written in the Abstract, even in the text and in Table 4 “Total sample” column it should be clearly mentioned that 226 participants were hospitalised in the year before baseline assessment.

2) Results, first paragraph. Mean age and prevalence of gender should refer to the 1,001 participants who completed the one-year follow-up.

3) Discussion, page 7. The paragraph starting with ‘Published studies have
found that admission to hospital is not always to the benefit of these EDPLH patients because...’ might be deleted since it is not related to this study, which considered previous hospital admissions among coveriates and not the risk of hospitalization as dependent outcome.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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.