Reviewer's report

Title: Implementation of the quality management system in Lithuanian palliative care hospitals

Version: 1 Date: 5 April 2006

Reviewer: Sheila Payne

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports a survey of the QMS implementation in Lithuanian palliative care hospitals from the perspective of managers. There are a number of problems with this paper which require revision.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It is not clear to me what the definition of ‘palliative care hospital’ is in Lithuania. From the brief description in the introduction, they appear to be long stay institutions for patients with chronic conditions. To assist understanding of the role and function of these hospitals for international readers, it is recommended that a detailed account of the function and nature of these hospitals is provided. Reference to the World Health Organisation definition of palliative care may assist the authors in clarifying this point.

2. More information is required about the process of QMS implementation more generally within Lithuania. For example, what were palliative care hospitals targeted for this survey? Were they better or worse than other hospitals? It seems that implementation was exceptionally slow 7 years ago compared to less than 2 years in other sections. Why was this?

Overall Review of Paper

1. It is not clear to me that this paper contributes new information that is presented in a useful way for an international readership. More background information about the socio-political context of Lithuania would contribute here.

2. The authors provide a brief account of the methods and research design. It is not clear how the questionnaire was developed, and if it was pilot tested. No information is presented about its reliability or validity.

3. The authors provided a descriptive analysis. It is difficult therefore to interpret these data as no comparisons are made with other hospitals or international data.

4. Data are reported appropriately.

5. The Discussion is reasonably clear but there are no conclusions.

6. Title – please refer to my previous point about the definition of ‘palliative care’.

7. The writing style is reasonably clear and concise.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests