Reviewer's report

Title: Development and evaluation of the feasibility and effects on staff, patients and families of a new tool to improve communication and palliative care in intensive care and during clinical uncertainty

Version: 1 Date: 26 August 2013

Reviewer: Geoffrey Mitchell

Reviewer's report:

Specific questions:
1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
Very well described – no revisions needed

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
The data are appropriate to the question. This is not a controlled trial, but an study that describes the development of an intervention which will undoubtedly be subjected to a controlled trial. The article contains a well justified sample size calculation for the size of the pilot sample.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title accurately represents the content of the paper - development and feasibility of the project

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

General comments
The paper covers very important topics- the process of decision making about end of life care in ICU wards, what the needs of family members are and how these can be met. The PACE tool aims to provide information to support decisions and actions in these most important and difficult areas.

It is clearly a paper reporting developmental work on the project, and presents
qualitative work that justifies further testing as a controlled trial.

It is written very well, and I cannot find any flaws in it. I recommend publishing it as it has been submitted.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests