Reviewer's report

Title: Expert opinion on the management of pain in hospitalised older patients with cognitive impairment: a mixed methods analysis of a national survey.

Version: 1
Date: 2 January 2015

Reviewer: Wilco Achterberg

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Review: Expert opinion on the management of pain in hospitalized older patients with cognitive impairment: a mixed method analysis of a national survey
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This is a study on an important and understudied issue, with a relatively small sample size. It is therefore not a ‘top’-study, but it does however help to build knowledge, although the authors could have investigated more details about the respondents. Were preferences dependent on age, sex, experience, education? Were their differences in confidence grade on the one hand and preferences on the other?

Specific points of attention:
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? YES
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? YES
3. Are the data sound? YES
4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation? YES
5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? YES
6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? I HAVE SOME COMMENTS ON THIS POINT
7. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? PARTLY
8. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? YES
9. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? PARTLY
10. Is the writing acceptable? YES

Discretionary Revisions
1- On page 5, (line 85), the authors state that the use of antipsychotics and sedatives “may be unnecessary” I would like to see the addition “…and harmful.”
2- Also page 5, line 93/94: there is no clear evidence, that people with cognitive impairment have a higher prevalence of delirium after the use of opioids.
Considering that also chronic pain can lead to delirium, this statement should not be used so easily.

Major Compulsory Revisions
3- To my opinion, it would be better to make a joined figure, and not three separate figures on the different types of medication. If I am correct, one could be happy, caution, or not using these medications in older people with cognitive impairment. Using a stacked bar diagram would show the results in one figure, which would help the clarity of these results.

4- I think the authors do injustice to their data, if they in their conclusions not also report on the trouble the respondents have with Tramadol, and to a lesser extent with Codeine.

5- The authors should reflect more on the preferences of the respondents in relation to the BGS standard (reference 16)

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

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