Reviewer’s report

Title: A Comparison of Symptoms in Older Hospitalised Cancer and Non-Cancer Patients in Need of Palliative Care: A Secondary Analysis of Two Cross-sectional Studies

Version: 1 Date: 15 Oct 2017

Reviewer: Neeltje van den Berg

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper to an interesting and important topic. However, some methodical issues are unclear and well some important aspects are missing in the discussion.

Methods:

1. In the methods is written: "To control for age and geriatric risk profile, 100 cancer patients were matched to the 100 non-cancer patients on these two variables."

This is not enough information about the method of matching. Did both parameters have to be identical for matched patients? Or equal?

I can't imagine, that exactly 100 cancer patients matched to exactly 100 non-cancer patients. What did you do if more than one patient matched? Or if no patient matched?

Please provide a detailed description of the matching process.

2. Why did you not include wards for palliative care?

3. Were any data assessed about the healthcare provision of the patients?

Results:

Information about the recruitment setting is missing. How many patients in each group were recruited in a geriatric ward, how many in an internal medicine ward?

Discussion:

A discussion about an eventual relation between healthcare provision and symptom frequency and intensity is missing. Is it possible, that cancer patients receive a better palliative care that can have an influence on symptoms?
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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