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: 2 Date: 29 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Saskia Juenger

Reviewer's report:

Thank you very much for the invitation to review the revised submission of the manuscript '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'. I would like to kindly thank the authors for their detailed response to all reviewers' comments. The authors have carefully considered all comments and thoroughly addressed all issues raised by the different reviewers. Questions and unclear issues have been sufficiently clarified. I appreciate that the authors have clearly taken all suggestions very seriously and that they considered providing a more detailed reflection on potential limitations of their study.

I clearly understand very well that the authors did not consider it as feasible to adjust the research question that had already been set prior to having conducted the study. However, I think that the overall message of the paper is much more balanced now, and it definitely corresponds much better with the data reported in the Table / Figure. In my view, the phrase on p. 13, ll. 30 - 38 would be worth remaining in the paper (the authors deleted it in the revised manuscript) - I found this a valuable conclusion in the original manuscript (particularly the indication for healthcare professionals and for education); I think that against the background of the overall much more balanced message of the paper, this passage is rather informative for clinical practice and education. However, I will of course leave it up to the authors' decision whether to keep this paragraph in their paper or not.

As to my last comment concerning the writing style, I am afraid that I may have expressed myself not very well - my apologies for that. Of course, I did not consider the message of the respective paragraph redundant, but rather the way of phrasing it since the sentences sounded a little bit repetitious. (Alternative suggestion: "Both patient groups might benefit from a referral to palliative support teams. These are specialised in managing complex symptoms, and the literature indicates that an early referral to a palliative support team increases patients' quality of life.")
There are just a very few typos in the new passages added by the authors, e.g. on p. 5 l. 11 ('This might strongly suggest' instead of 'suggests'); p. 5, l. 13 (I think it is 'needs-based' instead of 'need-based'); p. 9, l. 1 (...had to be identical TO allow to patients...).

In summary, I recommend accepting the manuscript without revision.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
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Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
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I am able to assess the statistics

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