Reviewer’s report

Title: Constipation and laxative use among people living in nursing homes in 2007 and 2013

Version: 0 Date: 20 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Per Farup

Reviewer’s report:

The paper has markedly improved. I still have some comments.

The definition of constipation poses problems since patients who were satisfactorily treated for constipation have not been classified as having constipation. The authors have explained why, and that is OK, but it has to be taken into account when evaluating the results. Another problem is the use of laxatives. It is not clear in the method section if only regular use of laxatives was registered or if "as needed" use was included. The discussion gives the impression that "as needed" use was not registered. Please clarify in the method section. The registration period was one week. Was a patient given laxatives twice ("as needed") during the registration week classified as using laxatives? In general, the wording in the paper could be improved.

Specific comments to the different parts:

Abstract.

Line 43. According to what I have written above, I prefer: "The prevalence of unsatisfactory relief of constipation among……"

Lines 46-47: "…in the regular use of"

Lines 56-59. I miss an important message in the conclusion and in the paper. Since the prevalence of unsatisfactory relief of constipation had increased significantly, the overall conclusion, independent of the use of opioids, is that the treatment of constipation has deteriorated from 2007 to 2013.

Results:

Lines 216-217: The overall use of laxatives cannot be corrected for anything, but the difference is statistically significant after correction for sex…… Rewrite the sentence.

Line 248. Table 5. Despite a higher prevalence of laxative users in 2013 than in 2007 (77% vs 57%) the prevalence of constipation was higher in 2013 than in 2007 (50% vs 46%). Please discuss. Could it be due to the use of less effective laxatives in 2013 or more use of opioids? The line "Residents rated constipated without laxatives" with calculation of p-value is superfluous
and should be removed since the numbers are indirectly written in the line above. I recommend you to revise the table and include the proportion of residents with constipation in the groups with and without the use of laxatives. The last line in the table gives little meaning to me. Patients without constipation and not using laxatives (49% in 2007 and 26% in 2013) do not need laxatives.

Discussion:

The discussion is long and little to the point and without clear relevance to the aims of the study. An example is the discussion of the effects of and the differences between the various laxatives, which is less relevant in the paper. Focus the discussion on the aims of the study, the clinical significance of the findings and propose practical consequences for clinical use.

Conclusion:

Do not repeat the aims. Clarify the findings, including the fact that the overall treatment of constipation has deteriorated.

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.

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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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