Reviewer’s report

Title: In-hospital care prior to assisted and unassisted suicide in swiss older people: A state-level retrospective study.

Version: 1  Date: 10 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Anna Szücs

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes a retrospective study comparing older adults who died by assisted versus unassisted suicide.

The authors took into consideration most of the suggestions for this first revision and I found this new version of the manuscript much improved. There nevertheless persist a few additional changes to be made in my opinion.

Even though I can see the authors' efforts about language, the manuscript would need additional English proofreading, including for its title and abstract.

Introduction:

This section is currently better structured and thorougher. There remains a few points that can be improved:

- on p. 4, the authors use the term "rational choice" to talk about assisted suicide (lines 8 and 9). This statement should be a little nuanced, since you state earlier in the Introduction that either form of suicide is supposed to be more rational in the elderly than in younger populations. Additionally, unassisted suicide could be a rational choice as well in some circumstances, while assisted suicide can still be irrational in some scenarios. More nuance in this statement would prevent getting into an ethical debate about these questions.

- on p. 4, the characteristics of suicide listed from line 28 on are directly linked to assisted suicide. This is misleading, since these precipitating factors have been found for suicide in general and are thus not informative on the difference between unassisted and assisted suicide. Thus, one cannot conclude from them that the "elderly who choose assisted suicide would be particularly sensitive to any worsening of their quality of life". In addition, the next paragraph (p. 5, line 4) is about suicide in general again. It would be good to make these sections more uniform, perhaps starting out with general findings about suicide and then narrowing the statements down to assisted suicide.
Methods:

The methods have been edited according to my previous comments. I have no further suggestions for this section.

Results:

The results gained in clarity. No further comments there either.

Discussion:

My only comment concerns the paragraph discussing mental and behavioral disorders on p. 10. I find the current interpretation a little confusing. It lacks a straightforward consideration, namely that individuals with mental and behavioral disorders already have a worse quality of life than the general population even without being hospitalized (higher rates of poverty, marginalization, stigma, etc.). At the same time, they often lack the necessary level of planning and organization to engage in assisted suicide procedures when they want to end their life, and therefore tend to carry out more impulsive, unassisted acts even when an assisted way of dying is available.

**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.

Yes

**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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I am currently working at the Geneva University Hospitals, similarly to the authors, but in a different Department. I have never collaborated with them on any research projects or during my clinical activity and have never met them in person. I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal