Reviewer's report

Title: Breaking Silence: A Survey of Barriers to Goals of Care Discussions from the Perspective of Oncology Practitioners

Version: 0 Date: 12 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Masanori Mori

Reviewer's report:

This is a single center, cross-sectional survey of oncology clinicians to explore barriers to goals of care discussions. The authors have suggested the relative importance of clinician-perceived barriers. I have the following comments to offer.

Major comments

1. While the authors provide clinically important findings, I'm afraid the majority of the findings have already been demonstrated in previous studies (e.g., reference 20). The authors used questionnaires based on reference 20, and reached very similar conclusions. Although they focused on cancer patients this time, the rational for having selected cancer patients only is not very clear.

2. As the authors mentioned in the limitation, the response rate is very low, especially nurses (26%) including only one APN. Given the nature of a single center survey, the low response rate markedly impairs the generalizability. Were there any differences in baseline characteristics between responders and non-responders?

3. The participants were overall young, and might not have sufficient experiences in oncology clinic. In particular, 5.9-week (mean) inpatient subspecialty oncology experiences of resident physicians might not be enough for them to reasonably assess the clinical situations and implications of the vignette case, and their understanding may be different from that of other oncology clinicians with years of actual experiences.

Minor comments

4. I am a little concerned about the differences in age in the three cases. For example, in case B where the patient was younger, the participants may have been more willing to engage in GoC discussions, which might have introduced a bias.
5. The authors indicated that previous studies had not quantified barriers experienced by physicians such as personal discomfort with death and dying and had been limited by small sample sizes. However, some larger studies have actually quantified them (e.g., Mori M, Shimizu C, Ogawa A, et al. Oncologist 2015;20:1304-11).

6. How were the GoC discussions defined in the questionnaire?

**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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable
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