Reviewer's report

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

Version: 0 Date: 24 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Jaclyn Yoong

Reviewer's report:

Thank you.

This is well written paper with a important relevant study question which has been justified clearly by the authors in the introduction. The response rate of 37% is consistent with most survey-based studies.

Points:

1) I am interested as to why the return for oncology nurses was lower. Could this have biased the results?

2) The conclusion is that "oncology practitioners perceive patients and family factors as the most limiting barriers to GoC discussions". While this has been demonstrated in the literature in other settings (e.g. heart failure, seriously ill hospitalised patients), there is also literature to suggest that physician factors play a role as well. While not the most limiting barrier that is perceived by the survey respondents in this study, the authors referenced some relevant papers #26, #27, #30, #31 that suggest physician factors are important to consider; and if I could suggest a paper by Trice et al: Communication in end-stage cancer: review of the literature and future research. (J Health Commun. 2009;14 Suppl 1:95-108) as well. Thus I think a more in-depth discussion about practitioner factors inc lack of training, lack of communication skills, discomfort with difficult conversations etc could be provided. Here are some additional references:


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?
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