Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying the need for specialized palliative care in adult cancer patients – Development and validation of a screening procedure based on proxy assessment by physicians and filter questions

Version: 0 Date: 01 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Eva Katharina Masel

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this interesting manuscript about Identifying the need for specialized palliative care in adult cancer patients - Development and validation of a screening procedure based on filter questions. I agree with the authors that there is a need for adequately identifying those in need for specialized palliative care. The paper is easy to follow and does have a logical flow. It is well written and focuses on an interesting topic that is clinically relevant. The title and abstract cover the main aspects of the work. The results are novel and the study does provide an advance in the field. Nevertheless, I would like to address some minor concerns to help to improve the quality of the manuscript.

Title

I would suggest to add „proxy assessment”:

Identifying the need for specialized palliative care in adult cancer patients - Development and validation of a screening procedure based on proxy assessment and filter questions

Abstract

Methods: you state that the NCCN guideline contains five domains (ten items) but then you mention six examples. Please specify. Furthermore, you should not only describe on what the tool is based on but also describe for what it was used to in your study. Moreover, I would suggest to at least shortly describe the IPOS.

Conclusion: please provide more information instead of „the new instrument” as some readers might only read the abstract.
Background:

Page 3, line 30: oncologists instead of oncologist

Study Aim: I would recommend to omit „Therefore“.

Page 5, line 5: patient-centered instead of patient-centred

Methods:

Study Design and Material

Page 6, line 48-49: Did the physician fill out the IPOS together with the patient? You should mention that IPOS is primarily used as a self assessment tool but can also be used in form of a proxy assessment by professionals or caregivers.

Discussion

General statement: I would recommend to omit numbers within the discussion section unless they are absolutely necessary. This leads to a better flow in reading. (Example, page 13, line 48-49: 27,4% could be replaced through „one third of the“).

Page 13, line 1-2: I would recommend to put into the introduction section that you wanted to validate a feasible tool to determine the need for a PC consultation as this part better fits to the introduction.

Page 13, line 15-16: We do not have information on the patients with SPC needs that we may have missed by the tool. Please put this sentence under limitations.

The aim of your study was to screen for patients who are in need for a PC consultation. Then you state that patients that already were in contact to PC showed significantly higher screening tools. Why weren't those patients excluded from the study? Table 2 shows that 44,7% already had contact to PC. Isn't this a severe bias?

Study limitations: Please state that your study aims only focused on an oncological setting but there will be needs in non cancer patients.

When you say that there is a need for minimal workload in daily routine you should state that the IPOS normally is not used as a proxy assessment tool and is mostly completed by the patients.

Table 4: please explain the abbreviations (PPV, NPV, PPV, NPV).
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 recommend additional statistical review

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

Acceptable

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