Reviewer’s report

Title: Second opinion for degenerative spinal conditions: an option or a necessity? A prospective observational study

Version: 0 Date: 01 Jan 2017

Reviewer: Michael J. Lee

Reviewer's report:

The authors present a manuscript examining the disparity of treatment recommendation for spinal surgery in Brazil. Their methods are well described, and the results speak for themselves. They observed a significant disparity in surgical recommendation between 'community spine surgeons' and surgeons at their hospital. Only in a minority of cases was there a consensus on surgical recommendation.

The manuscript is interesting and reprints a contribution to the literature in that it highlights a wide disparity of surgical indication among spine surgeons. It would be interesting to see for what reasons why there was disagreement with the initial surgical indication (insufficient non-operative treatment, disagreement of effectiveness of surgical treatment, etc.) If these data are available, it would greatly enhance the quality of the manuscript if these data were included.

I strongly recommend the authors refrain from the term "inappropriate surgery". This carries a judgmental connotation and as the authors themselves noted, it is challenging to label a recommendation as "right" or "wrong". I suggest that the authors use verbiage that is more neutral. Otherwise, the large disparity observed highlights the wide spectrum of surgical opinion in spine surgery (at least in Brazil). I recommend publication with minor revision.

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.

Unable to assess

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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