Reviewer’s report

Title: Strategies for effective goals of care discussions and decision-making: Perspectives from a multi-centre survey of Canadian hospital-based healthcare providers

Version: 2 Date: 28 April 2015

Reviewer: Linda Emanuel

Reviewer’s report:

General:
Limited significance due to preponderance of nurses and trainees over physicians.
More information is needed about the frequency of themes and how often respondents came up with multiple suggestions, especially if they thought that multi-modality was important.

Specific:
Line 41 ‘open-ended’ is redundant; all questions were open ended. Or if it is the case (implied later – bring some of what is in line 316 and on up front), explain that this report is the qualitative part of a mixed open and closed-ended survey.
Line 43: Later the response rate of physicians in reported at >70%. Note here the difference between closed and open ended item response rates, or do something so that the reader is not puzzled.
Line 85: the longer trajectory of chronic illness and possibilities for living with disability add to the complexity and prominence of the issue. Goals of care are relevant for all illness care, not just near the end of life.
Line 90: missing word changes the meaning to the opposite of intended. ‘or they approach…’
Line 89/90: Did this second sentence get included in the definition that was given to survey participants? Be explicit.
Participants; lines 114/120: Explain why chaplains and social workers or counsellors were not included.
Study procedures: Need more detail so the reader understands – especially the low response rates for physicians. The goal was to get provider opinions, but mostly you have nurse and trainee opinions.
Line 164: Rounding up in the abstract but not here makes the reader confused.
Line 334-7: Bring this up into the background section.
Lines 367-74: ditto
Lines 388-390: Low physician response rate must be addressed, as must absence of input from chaplains, social workers, counsellors/psychologists, etc.