Author’s response to reviews

Title: The Relationship between Pain Management and Psychospiritual Distress in Patients with Advanced Cancer Following Admission to a Palliative Care Unit

Version: 0 Date: 02 Sep 2015

Reviewer: Eloise Carr

Reviewer's report:

This is an very interesting study and certainly an important one given how inadequate pain management can have such a profound impact on cancer patients at the end of life. It clearly builds on an important program of work. The aim of this prospective longitudinal study was to examine the longitudinal relationship between pain management and psychosocial spiritual distress in advanced cancer patients admitted to a palliative care unit.

Major concerns/revisions

The use of the word 'longitudinal' in the title might be a little misleading as there is only one further data collection point, one week after admission. Whilst all prospective observational studies could be called longitudinal I am not sure you really did look at a longitudinal relationship. This requires clearer clarification. My concern also extends to your conclusions in relation to this.

Limitations: It might be seen that the measurement of pain on a numerical rating scale was a limitation as pain is a multidimensional experience which you mention in the paper. Did you consider using a multidimensional tool such as the Melzack Pain Questionnaire (MPQ)? This might have given more information related to the components of pain e.g. cognitive or affective and not just the sensory or physical dimensions. Also does a numerical score equal a measure of 'pain management'? Pain assessment and documentation, medication, administered, and comfort strategies might also have been measured to indicate how pain was being managed.

In the conclusion I would suggest that your results would also support the recommendation that the routine assessment of psychological distress factors should be encouraged.

Minor revisions

In the background please could you clarify the difference between emotional distress and psychosocial spiritual distress. These terms are used interchangeably but not clearly defined.
The selection of participants (inclusion criteria) was based on levels of consciousness. Please give further details of this tool and how it was used.

Participants were consecutively enrolled in the study as they were admitted to the palliative care unit. How many were approached and how many declined?

The methods section relies heavily on previous studies to endorse the selection of measurement tools. These might be described more fully for the reader not familiar with them.

How was the cut-off for 'improved' and 'not improved' determined?

**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.

No

**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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

**Declaration of competing interests**
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?
2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below.
If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal