Reviewer’s report

Title: How different is the care of terminal pancreatic cancer patients in inpatient palliative care units and acute hospital wards? A nationwide population-based study

Version: 3
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Reviewer: Anthony Staines

Reviewer’s report:

Review of ‘How different is the care of terminal pancreatic cancer patients in inpatient palliative care units and acute hospital wards? A nationwide population-based study.’

I have been asked to do a statistical review of this study.

General comments
The study is clearly written and well presented. I note that the last patient recruited was entered in 2006, which is some time ago. If there have been any changes in palliative care in Taiwan since that time, these ought to be briefly mentioned on the discussion.

Minor essential revisions
Page 9, line 9 - Patients were identified from the ‘Registry for Catastrophic Illness Patient database, which is a separate subsection of the NHI database’. While I appreciate that it is likely that most patients would sign up for this, as it reduces care costs, can the authors confirm that this is so?

Interpretation – It is not clear exactly which population is being studied here – how many people died of pancreatic cancer in Taiwan between 2003 and 2006, and how many were included in these analyses? Reading the discussion it sounds as if home palliative care is widely used – is this so? There were around 1400 deaths from pancreatic cancer annually from 2008 to 2010 (http://tcr.cph.ntu.edu.tw/main.php?Page=N2), which suggest that relatively few of the cases used either of the services analysed here. This does not affect your central point, but would provide useful context for non-Taiwanese reading your work.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests