Reviewer’s report

Title: Health care use and costs at the end of life: A comparison of elderly Australian decedents with and without a cancer history

Version: 0 Date: 02 Aug 2016

Reviewer: Nikki McCaffrey

Reviewer's report:

General comments

This study is a useful contribution to the field of research on the costs of cancer at the end of life. The manuscript is very well-written and well-structured. The objective of the study is clear and succinct and the study presents original findings. The methods appear appropriate. Generally, tables and figures are well-presented and easily understandable. The paper could benefit from the following minor revisions.

1. Minor Essential Revisions

1.1. Introduction - Lines 95-98, suggest give the readership an idea of the magnitude of the costs as well as the relativity.

1.2. Introduction - Line 96, what is meant by "close to death"? Last few weeks of life? Last month?

1.3. Introduction - Line 113, perhaps give a few examples of local health system characteristics such as level of provision of home-based palliative care services.

1.4. Methods - lines 148-152, suggest move to the Results section.

1.5. Methods - line 174, why are costs reported in 2009/10 Australian dollars rather than inflated to 2016 values?

1.6. Methods - line 180, please provide a brief explanation of why a negative binomial regression analysis was chosen. Whilst this approach is typically used for count data, why was this also used for analysing the cost data?

1.7. Methods - lines 186-187, please explain why two measures of comorbidity burden were chosen. If the Charlson is likely to "under ascertain morbidity burden" why use this approach in addition to the RxRisk?
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 am able to assess the statistics

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

Acceptable

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