Reviewer's report

Title: Relatives' perceived quality of palliative care: comparisons between care settings in which patients die

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Reviewer: Bridget Candy

Reviewer's report:

I think this research study is worthy of publication. It demonstrates in advanced analysis that quality of care from the viewpoint of the family is better when a person dies at home. Whilst this finding is not a surprise, they have come to this conclusion using data with a broader range of key characteristics than (so they say) earlier research has.

What limits this manuscript as it stands is in places language use. I would recommend that they get a native English language speaker to read through, as some sentences are not clear and others have words missing. I also think they need to provide more information in the abstract on how this research project is providing new findings (in that it is using data with a broader range of key characteristics than earlier research.

Below are some suggested changes:

Title

I think the title could be better stated, such as perhaps:

Relatives perceived quality of palliative care: comparison between when a patient dies at home or in a hospice

Or

Relatives perceived quality of palliative care: comparisons between care setting where a patient dies
Abstract

Background second and third sentence. Currently these sentences are 'most people prefer to die at home. But does the perceived quality of care vary, depending on where you dies'.

This may be clearer by stating:

'Most people prefer to die at home. But does their relatives perceived quality of care vary depending on what care setting is the place of death'.

Objectives: Currently: The objective is to examine where there are differences in the perceived quality of palliative care between the settings where people die, from the relatives' perspective. Clearer by stating: Objectives: To compare from the relatives perspective whether there are any perceived differences in the quality of palliative care between the settings where a person dies.

Methods: May be helpful to the reader if you state what dataset you are referring to, as in does it have a name? Can you state when the relatives were ask this in relation to when their loved one died? What was the 'another institution' could you say such as a prison or school? How did you analysis this dataset the reader needs to know this. Could you say anything about these relatives, were they close family or spouses?

Results: you need to give some data here if your analysis was quantitative. The results are not very interesting, I wonder if they could say more on differences between home and hospice.

Main text

Background section: second paragraph, starts ' But does the perceived quality of care actually vary, depending on where you die? This sentence needs revision, it is firstly odd to start a paragraph using the word 'but'. The sentence misleads as it reads as if it is the person who died who perceives the quality of care. Also same paragraph, I question the wording 'quality of their death', is there a better way of expressing this?

Third paragraph discusses the limitations of earlier research. One limitation is that research is from one particular group of patients, can they say who this group were, also what is a long time ago. It may be helpful to allude to these reasons in the abstract, such as for example in the background you could say in the second sentence 'Earlier research has found relatives perceived quality of care to vary depending on what setting their loved one died. However this research is limited most notably as it has only focused on outcomes in [?cancer] patients.' You could then say these findings may not be applicable to other population groups because xxx Then in the next
sentence you could say in your statement of your objectives you could also say why your research is better. In the background section it would be helpful to say what this wide range of diseases are and whether they are common diseases.

The study question: Check the use of comma in sentence. Also this is not a study question but study questions.

Next paragraph, the word 'actually' is redundant, please remove. The nature of long term relationships with GP and nursing and other support staff needs to be mentioned in discussion especially as this may be unique to the Netherlands.

In section on description of the dataset used I would have the paragraph content different. The first would include all details on the CQ-Index and the second would include details on where the data was collected. Can you say anything about who approach the responders, as was it an independent researcher and where they able to answer the questionnaire in privacy, could staff at the particular health setting has access to their responses or was it anonymous. Can you give in this section any indication of how representative were this sample to the Dutch population of people who died over that time period and who died from a chronic disease? Also what was their response rate or did all who were approached answer?

Results section: First sentence missing %. Next sentence add spouse/partner and adult child. Second paragraph, change words 'the largest number' to 'Most'.

In section headed the perceived quality of palliative care, could you add formal before caregivers, this is as sometimes family members can be referred to as informal caregivers. Second paragraph in this section can you provide a source to these figures between different care settings. I think you need to distinguish more the difference in this analysis compared to the analyses where you control for other factors. Perhaps it would help if you add the type of analysis to your subheadings.

Discussion:

Sentence, 2nd paragraph that states 'most people end-up admitted…' this sentence could be written more clearly. Another paragraph in discussion states 'within our research, we have also looked….' This sentence is missing toward the end an 'in'. Also what are concrete questions, please express this better. In places in the manuscript you inter change between illness and disease, please keep to one perhaps best to keep to 'disease'.
Please consider whether you have made enough in your discussion of the differences between the disease groups, especially as this was one of the reasons why your work adds to this field. Moreover your overall findings are the same as studies previously had found, is this would you say disappointing such we be seeking to improve quality in other settings beyond the home.

I think you should add more on limitations of data set - as in perhaps response rate, representativeness to Dutch pop. Were their potential issues in data collection that may biased the results? Could the researchers of this paper have included other variables that may account for differences in quality such as ethnicity, location of care services as in a high economic area compared to a poor area? The authors also do not allude to how general sable their results are to other populations in other countries.

Do you have any research recommendations?

Tables

Please make sure you explain all abbreviations in tables, reconsider the headings of the tables, as some could be clearer.

**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 recommend additional statistical review

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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