Reviewer’s report

Title: End of life care preferences among people of advanced age: LilACS NZ

Version: 0 Date: 27 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Olav Lindqvist

Reviewer’s report:

I have now with interest reviewed the manuscript "End of life care preferences amongst people of advanced age" (PCAR-D-16-00150), and find it both interesting and important. I have the impression however, that the manuscript was not entirely ready for submission, as it has some shortcomings and either "typos" or discrepancies that need to be addressed. That said, I think this article should be considered for publication in BMC Palliative Care if these and the following issues are addressed.

Below are my more detailed comments to the manuscript:

Title

* I would suggest that the title could be a bit more informative, containing Māori or indigenous (and non-Māori/non-indigenous?).

Abstract

* I suppose that ">80 years" can be used in the abstract, as all participants were over that age, however, in the article it is stated that the non-Māori sample were >85 years.

* In the Setting/Design paragraph it is also stated that this was a "home-based, interviewer-led questionnaire", however that is not mentioned or explained in the manuscripts method section.

Keywords

* Are appropriate.

Background

* Short, but appropriate for the presented study.

* The term "advanced age" is used throughout the manuscript, but the term isn't defined. Might be important for the reader, especially in the light of the different ages you have chosen—which
I have no argument with—in the two groups, (Māori sample >80yrs., and non-Māori sample >85 yrs.).

Aim/ Objectives

* Research aim and objectives OK.

Methods

* "A homebased, interviewer-led questionnaire" is written in the abstract, but not in the method section, and, as noted above, is not explained.

* Analysis (p.6): Regarding the statistical analysis, it is stated that for descriptive statistics mean, mode, SD was used but it's unclear where that is reported, and regarding the inferential statistics it is stated that t-test was also used, but when/where it was used does not seem to be indicated in the text.

* The reason for collapsing the EOL preferences from a 5-point scale to 3 categories should be made more clear, why not analyze the ranked 5-point scale as it was?

* "SF-12 comparisons" isn't explained or given any reference to the specific questionnaire used.

Results

There are some differences in numbers reported in the text and tables (typos?) that need to be addressed (see also the separate comments to the tables and figures below).

* Headline "Wave 3…" (p.7): some kind of inference statistic is apparently applied ("(p>.05)"), but very sparsely described.

* "Participant Overview" (p.7): Some of the numbers in the text do not correspond with Table 2. For example, line 115 "Of note is that 33.4%..." is 33.3 in table 2. Line 118 "45.9% of non-Māori..." is 45.1 in table 2. These details may not be substantially important, but hinder understanding and give a somewhat careless impression.

* "Relative importance…" (p.8): Here the presentation is a bit confusing as the text in the section does not correspond to Figure 1 and 2 which it refers to. Regarding the Māori sample, the first two preferences are the same in the text as in Figure 1, but then the text (line 129) reads "…followed by "to have my pain symptoms" controlled" (49.2%) (Figure 1)." But, in Figure 1 "To have my pain/symptoms well controlled" is preceded by both "To feel my life is complete" and "To have sorted out my personal affairs". In the paragraph regarding the non-Māori sample (line 130-132) and Figure 2 the first preference corresponds, but the two following have different ratings/place in the text and in the Figure.
* "End of life care planning..." (p.8, line 135): the first paragraph regarding Māori (line 136-138) and non-Māori samples (line 142-145) presents data which is not shown in any of the Tables, as far as I can see. I think that can be stated in the text, along with more detail about the analyses, e.g. frequencies. I also found the use of the word "extremely" on line 148 notably stronger than the use of "very" in the Table.

Discussion (incl. limitations, conclusion)

* The discussion is interesting and relevant. However, the interesting issue regarding assisted dying related to being a burden is only raised in the conclusions; I think this is worthy of being mentioned more extensively in the discussion section.

* In Table 2 there are quite few responses in the Māori sample regarding "Major surgical intervention if you become ill?" (in total n=21) and "Do you wish to be resuscitated?" (in total n=23). Maybe this should be specifically addressed in the limitation section?

References

* The reference list needs to be checked for typos, e.g. ref. 8: "pPeolpe", and missing dots and commas, e.g. ref. 11, etc.

Tables and figures

Overall, the table titles are brief (data is missing), and as noted above, there are a number of typos in the tables, or otherwise discrepancies between the tables and the text. I haven't recounted and checked all details, below are further examples, so these need to be thoroughly checked.

Table 1

* Total number of participants (421/516) is missing (in the table title or table).

* The first age range in the table is "85-90", but the text states that the Māori sample was >80 yrs. (p.3 line 23).

* "Education/Primary School...": for non-Māori sample present a frequency of 83 and percent of 63.1 - should probably be around 16,1%?

* "What best describes your home?/Other": for the non-Māori sample the percentage for should probably be something like 0.2.
Table 2

* As mentioned above, some numbers in the text (p. 7 "Participant Overview") do not correspond with the table.

* The subsample included in the table (Māori n=63 and non-Māori n=144), do not correspond with some of the questions, e.g. "Have you talked to a friend or family member about your wishes?" n=64 for Māori, and n=146 for the non-Māori.

* The table legend for valid percent is missing.

Table 3

* Number of participants and explanations to abbreviations/legends is missing (X2, P, *).

Table 4

* See table 3 above.

Figure 1

* The content presented in the text does not correspond with the figure, see above ("Relative importance…" p.8).

* While percent is stated in the figure title, I think it also should be included in the Figure.

Figure 2

* See figure 1 above.

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

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