**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Twenty years of Home-Based Palliative Care in Malappuram, Kerala, India: A descriptive study of patients and their care-givers

**Version:** 0 **Date:** 19 Sep 2017

**Reviewer:** Pablo Hernández-Marrero

**Reviewer's report:**

In general, this is an interesting manuscript that addresses how home-based palliative care evolved over the last twenty years in Malappuram, Kerala, India. This is of interest as the authors managed to show the links between the evolution and the need for flexible policies in this field. Some nice commentaries are present that are thoughtful and informative.

Relatively minor revisions are, in my opinion, recommended:

1. **Abstract:** Please, state the objectives of the study clearly.

2. **Keywords:** Please, remove Kerala from the keywords. Kerala is the context of the study and not a proper keyword.

3. Please, avoid using the term "trend", as this is more a descriptive study and not an actual trend series study.

4. The authors mention "catering" and "caters" as part of the home-based palliative care model that they are describing. It would be helpful to have some more detailed information on this model and figures involved in home-based palliative care. What are their actual practices? What specific type of care do they provide? How do they related to home-based palliative care teams and/or nurses and physicians?

5. **Background.** In page 5, the authors refer to the fact that "the policy considers home-based care as the "cornerstone" of palliative care services". What about the culture? How much is the policy influenced by the dominant culture?

6. **Objectives.** Please, move the objectives to the end of the background/introduction section and not as part of the methods section.

7. Why do the authors consider to have performed an analysis of secondary data from patient case records? What makes this secondary data?
8. Outcome variables. What exactly were the outcomes studied? Please, specify this clearly. Was it the type of care (active, transferred out, out of care)? If so, please, make this clear to the reader.

9. Results and discussion. I have some doubts on the statement that "The pattern of clinical diagnoses changed from a predominance in cancer in the initial years to" other conditions. In fact, if we look at figure 2 that illustrates this finding, the truth is that cancer is still the most common diagnosis. What changed was that the proportion of patients with other conditions increased and the sum of those conditions exceeds the one of cancer. I would recommend the authors to better present, explain and discuss this relevant finding.

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

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 that 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.