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: 26 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Tony Ryan

Reviewer's report:

1. The introduction might be improved with reference to descriptions of such provision present in the wider literature and relating to community based palliative care services, particularly that which exists outside of India. This will place the service in a global context and enable the reader to understand its importance relative to other service provision in the international arena. Similarly the origins of the Kerala service might be compared to others outside of the region as this might highlight similarities or key differences, reflecting the uniqueness of the context.

2. The author continues to refer to Kerala as a 'lauded model'. It would be useful to highlight how this is demonstrated.

3. Furthermore, information on other community based models in terms of patient characteristics and outcomes would strengthen the introduction.

4. It would be useful to know why particular decisions about time sampling have been taken. For example some of the data collection occurs over a 20 year period, whilst outcomes are captured in a relatively small time period. This approach appears to have a flawed logic and requires clarification. Furthermore, there appears limited rationale for looking at 'opt-out'. I am not saying that this isn't an important question but rather that it appears somewhat out of the blue.

5. There is limited rationale for the selection of Manjeri as the focus of the study, although some information about the setting is included the reader is not privy to the decision to focus solely on this site.

6. Despite ethical permission there is limited discussion about the challenges the team would have faced in gaining such authorisation, especially given that the team would be gaining access to notes and records where consent to research was presumably not given by individual patients. I think a brief discussion about this would help the reader and allow reviewers to understand the ethical review process more clearly.

7. There is limited discussion about the historical nature of these data. The time sample for patient characteristics data collection is 20 years. As such it might be anticipated that the
nature of data recording and coding may have changed. There is a limited discussion about this problem and how the team have overcome such a challenge. Furthermore, a more general note about the limitations of historical data not collected for research purposes should be made.

8. The discussion is rather limited in its analyses. The growth in the number of NCDs over the period is cited but there is limited discussion about policy changes, locally and internationally with regard to palliative provision for such patients. How have global trends in the nature and focus of palliative care impacted upon the clinic's work? The discussion also lacks inclusion of data from other community based services- see notes about introduction.

9. On the whole this paper has the potential to provide so much more if situated within a wider literature. Notwithstanding other weakness, as it stands it reads a little like a research letter or short report.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**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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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

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