Reviewer’s report

Title: Does packed red cell transfusion provide symptomatic benefits to cancer palliative patients?: a longitudinal study from a single private oncology center in Nepal

Version: 0 Date: 30 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Timothy To

Reviewer’s report:

Thankyou for having me review this paper.

An important area for research, though challenging to design and run trials for given the nature of the intervention.

My reservations about this paper include:

- introduction and discussion - fatigue and dyspnoea in advanced cancer are likely mediated by a number of mechanisms, not just cancer related anaemia as suggested by the author group; eg. cytokines, malnutrition, hypermetabolic state, pulmonary disease, comorbidities

- outcome measurements - fatigue was assessed using a global yes/no; whilst dyspnoea using the 'dyspnoea index' - this index was not described nor dyspnoea defined using its outcomes

- the conclusions drawn do not recognise strongly enough the effect of having an intervention, whether the intervention helped or not; subjective reports of fatigue and dyspnoea improved significantly most likely because something was done! To illustrate this point, the fatigue levels in a group that did not receive a transfusion improved by 33%; imagine what the 'placebo' effect of having a transfusion was in reducing fatigue by 45% and breathlessness by 73%

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?
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No
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
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Needs some language corrections before being published

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