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: 1 Date: 11 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Timothy To

Reviewer’s report:

There remains some significant issues for this paper; some of which I may have missed on the original paper, and some that have emerged with the rewrite.

1. Title - the study looks at symptoms rather than functional status and the title should reflect this.

2. Several parts of the paper refer to issues around cancer, third world/nepal, access to palliative care etc. I'm not sure how much this adds to this paper, as transfusion for anaemia is an issue that faces all palliative care services; I would suggest making the developing world issues less prominent

3. line 55 - obesity (rather than overweight)

4. line 64 - anaemia is not a symptom

5. In palliative care, whilst there may be anaemia, the thing that clinicians should be treating is symptoms rather than anaemia. Most commonly this is for fatigue (see http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2017.0072). Similar to the discussion about cancer induced anaemia, fatigue is usually multifactorial and not just related to the anaemia; I think the paper should reflect this better; in targetting a symptom, anaemia is but one of the reversible factors

6. Aim - not sure the study really 'finding out the haemoglobin trigger values'... I would suggest remove

7. Aim - second aim I would suggest removing functional status reference and just state change in symptoms

8. line 98 - replace 'denied' with 'not accessing' or alike

9. line 102 - change 'on' remission to 'in' remission

10. thankyou for articulating the dyspnoea index; however you still analysed using binary breathlessness - how did you classify this binary divide for hte readers information?

11. line 132 - 44+3 patients, but line 133 refers to 46 patients - is this correct?
12. The percentage reductions in my first review referred to relative risk reduction rather than absolute risk reduction; often this is a more helpful metric.

13. line 161 - CIA abbreviated, but this was not used previously in this way.

14. line 163 not sure of the significance of this sentence and whether this is required.

15. The discussion around the placebo effects of 'transfusion' should be discussed; the authors have attempted to explain the benefit in symptoms in the non-transfused group, however have not extended this to the placebo effect on the transfused group; this section also needs to be a little more concise.

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.

No.

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published.

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