Reviewer’s report

Title: Determining the prevalence of palliative needs and exploring screening accuracy of depression and anxiety items of the Integrated Palliative care Outcome Scale – a multi-centre study

Version: 0 Date: 31 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Lisa Mackenzie

Reviewer's report:

Thanks to the authors for submitting their revisions to interesting manuscript, reporting on a cross-sectional study of Portuguese patients diagnosed with an incurable and potentially life threatening illness. Distress and concerns relating to symptoms, supportive care and spirituality were assessed using reliable and valid scales (Portuguese versions of the Integrated Palliative care Outcome Scale; Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale).

The data reporting on the prevalence of palliative care needs is useful new information.

I have some concerns about the statistical approach to assessing screening accuracy of the IPOS psychological needs items. This relates to a) the small sample size; b) use of HADS in place of a gold standard psychiatric interview to detect true positive "cases" - the authors should describe HADS as a measure of symptoms of anxiety and depression, rather than a measure of anxiety and depression disorders; and c) use of sensitivity/specific analysis. I recommend a statistical review of whether this approach is appropriate, or whether an assessment of agreement (kappa) between measures might be more appropriate. If sensitivity/specific analysis, then 95% CIs of these estimates should be included.

Minor comments: Figure 1 not required. Please report this information and the overall consent rate among eligible patients should also be reported in text and the abstract. Figure 2 should be edited so item descriptions on the y axis to describe item focus rather than question number. These descriptions should align with equivalent item descriptions in Figure 3. Figures 4 and 5 need to provide key (reference line vs depression/ anxiety). Reference list formatting needs review for consistency.

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.

Yes

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 recommend additional statistical review

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
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