Reviewer’s report

Title: IDentification of patients in need of general and specialised PALLiative care (ID-PALL©): item generation, content and face validity of a new interprofessional screening instrument.

Version: 1 Date: 01 Dec 2019
Reviewer: Simon Etkind

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes the initial development of a measure to identify palliative care need, differentiating between specialist vs generalist need. The authors have described their methods thoroughly, using a standardised approach in 4 stages based on literature review, item generation, a delphi consensus, and a questionnaire. I think the development of a tool that distinguishes between specialist and generalist palliative care need is a very useful and novel contribution, and the paper is original and well written. I do have some questions and comments for the authors which I think should be addressed prior to publication:

General comments

1. This tool proposes to identify generalist and specialist palliative care need, and is targeted at generalist health professionals, but as I understand it, all involved in the item generation were professionals with specialist palliative care experience. Generalists, patients or service users were not involved. Could the authors justify this decision in the manuscript. How do the authors think their decision to focus on specialist professionals may have affected the findings?

2. I think given the focus on generalist vs specialist palliative care need in the results/discussion, this needs to be discussed in more detail in the background. Could the authors explain more clearly why it is important to distinguish between specialist and generalist need.

3. I recognise that there is limited space to describe each stage of this study, but it is important to include details such as how participants were identified and the analysis used (see specific comments below. They could consider adding more detail as supplementary files in line with relevant reporting guidelines.

4. Whilst I accept that the authors conducted thematic qualitative analysis of free text responses, I think that it is inaccurate for the authors to say their methodology was qualitative and quantitative. It would be more accurate to say that this was a questionnaire study with fixed option and free text questions, then detail the different analysis methods used for different response types. They could consider including additional details of the qualitative analysis as a supplementary file.
5. Though it is possible to extract the information from table 2, it is quite difficult for the reader to see at a glance what the final set of items was. Could these be listed in the text or included as a separate figure?

6. Could the authors include more detail about the tool and how completion of the tool would be used in clinical practice. What number of criteria would need to be met for a person to 'have' generalist/specialist needs? This may be something to be covered in future research, but should still be considered here.

Specific comments

Background

1. The background sets up the study well, but I think it could be more clearly structured, with fewer points per paragraph. E.g.

   - Palliative care has been defined, but identifying individuals with palliative care needs is an ongoing challenge

   - This is an increasingly important public health concern given expected growth in need

   - Identification of patients with palliative care need varies, and people are often identified late, with important consequences for care

   - existing tools are limited, in particular there is no gen/spec differentiation, designed for doctors - (why are these limitations important?)

   - aim

2. P3 line 64 - can the authors specify why identification of palliative care patients is a public health concern, and why particularly in the last 10 years

3. P4 line 91 Could the authors expand slightly on their argument that an instrument is needed that is targeted at nurses/non-physicians?

4. P4 line 87. Isn't this the aim of the study, rather than the aim of the paper

5. P4 lines 89-93 - I think this discussion of the target users of the instrument would probably fit better in the methods, e.g. in the study design section.

Methods:
The authors describe the complex and multistage methods well, but there are a few areas that could be clearer:

step 1.

6. P5 line 102. I don't understand this sentence. The overall concept of 'identifying palliative care needs' has already been outlined in the background. As it is described, the authors have conducted a focused literature review to identify existing definitions of palliative care need. I think 'determine the concept to measure' is therefore a bit confusing in this section, though I recognise it comes from the streiner model. Could the authors rephrase to clarify that the literature review was conducted to identify existing definitions of palliative care to inform item generation, not determine a new concept.

7. How did the authors extract their findings from the literature? Did they conduct any form of synthesis of the literature? I think this should be mentioned in the manuscript.

step 2.

8. P5 line 115. 'first author'. There were two first authors - please specify which author(s) did this bit.

9. Was there any patient or service user input into the CICE? If not, please comment in the discussion how this may have affected the results.

10. Please state more overtly what the proposed output of step two was - was it a list of possible items to include in the measure?

step 3.

11. How were potentially eligible participants for the delphi survey identified and approached?

step 4.

12. How did the authors decide on their approach for step 4 and did they consider alternative/additional approaches e.g. cognitive interviewing to evaluate face and content validity of the tool? If not, this should be considered in future research.

Results:
13. P8 line 181 - 'general palliative care concerns nearly 80%....' I think there is ongoing uncertainty as to what proportion of palliative care needs are general vs specialist. Suggest this statement is qualified, e.g. 'may concern up to 80%'

14. Table 1 is quite technical, and would perhaps be better as a supplementary file. Instead, the authors could consider including details of participants in steps 3 and 4 in a table of participant characteristics. I recognise some details are included in the text, but it would be helpful to include more detail and a table would be clearer. If available, it would be helpful to report more details of participants (e.g. age, gender, profession, level of experience of palliative care) Details of the level of

**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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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