Reviewer’s report

Title: What do Japanese residents learn from treating dying patients? The implications for training in end-of-life care

Version: 0 Date: 10 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Bente Malling

Reviewer’s report:

The paper sets out to explore residents’ experiences from EOL-care and what they learn from treating dying patients. Indeed an important issue in all cultures. Therefore the paper is of interest to a broad audience and the findings do contribute to our knowledge on how to educate future physicians on this important matter, even if no clear directions on how to conduct this education are made. The authors provide us with a discussion on possible ways of how to educate in the future. The conclusion is rather strong taking the explorative character of the study into consideration. The paper is well written and the ethical issues appropriately addressed.

The title is appealing and reflects the content of the paper.

The abstract is clearly written and gives a good overview. However, the conclusion gives a rather strong direction on how to educate in the future that is not quite in harmony with the explorative character of the investigation. I suggest that the phrase "will help improve" is changed to "might improve" (p 1 line 33) since it is a suggestion - not something that the authors have investigated.

The background is clear, well referenced and provides a clear research question.

The methodology is well described and the method used appropriate to answer the research questions. The analysis is clearly described and results are supported by citations from the interviews. The results section is clear and the reader helped through sub-headings that reflect the analysis. Results are related to the conceptual framework presented in the introduction.

Limitations are acknowledged and discussed.

The discussion provides suggestions on what might help prepare young doctors in learning EOL care - including how educators can help residents to cope with the many opposing feelings around dying patients and the feeling of insufficiency it may give professionals that are brought up with the urge to treat and make patients well again.

The authors have chosen to interview residents and the findings are interesting and give reason to reflect on our practice. However, it might be necessary to explore the perspectives from the attending doctors and the nursing staff too. I understand and acknowledge that this is beyond the scope of this study.
The conclusion is rather strong: "By providing them with more opportunities to learn strategies to manage or cope with their emotions and difficult situations, their professional identities can be developed more effectively" (p 14 lines 26-28). This might be right - but was not investigated in this study. To provide feedback taking emotions into consideration also is commonly agreed - but again not the focus of this study? Therefore the conclusion should be brought into more coherence with the investigation indeed done.

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.

Unable to assess

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?
4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.