Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of electronic patient-reported outcome assessment with cancer patients in the hospital and at home

Version: 2 Date: 21 September 2015

Reviewer: Grigorios Kotronoulas

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this cross-sectional, evaluation study of internet use and use of two different interfaces of an ePRO system that enables quality of life assessments for patients with cancer in Austria. The manuscript is well written with a very clear account of the study's aim, research objectives and methods. The discussion reflects the study's findings, and I have particularly liked the detailed limitations section. My comments/suggestions are as follows:

Major compulsory revisions:

The two study groups appear very different to me in terms of their background/clinical characteristics (Table 1), which makes me wonder whether aggregation to a total sample of 158 is really appropriate here and whether such an approach 'distorts' the findings. In that sense, I would suggest that the authors present findings for the clinic-ePRO and home-ePRO groups separately in the Results section (Results section: lines 233-270) and in Tables 2-3, so that the unique views of these two different groups show up. As a result, revision of the Discussion section may be necessary, and this may need extended to the Abstract too. Relatedly, I am unsure as to the necessity of the 'comparisons' section in lines 244-255, or whether the differences shown are really "minor" as the authors claim them to be. I'd suggest that the authors either remove this section (especially since it is not mentioned as a research objective in this study) or, if it is absolutely necessary to be present, take a more comprehensive statistical approach such as logistic regression to try and tease out the influence of demographic/clinical group diversity so that any statistical inferences made are more reliable. A similar approach may be required when considering the comparisons between those opting for home-ePRO versus those refusing or opting for telephone calls. Yes, there was a difference based on age and a trend based on gender, but if I'm not wrong, all 166 patients had opted for clinic-ePRO in the first place. What the reasons for not subscribing to home-ePRO too might go beyond just age/gender (disease staging? performance status? educational attainment? occupation?) I'd be interested to at least see a discussion of these potential influential factors to explain the above shown differences. Lastly, what do the authors think of the patients' perceived advantages/disadvantages of the ePRO (clinic or home). Especially with regard to advantages, percentage
agreement might seem 'low' for specific items; what do you think the reasons were? How can this be increased?

Minor essential revisions:
Line 291: I'd suggest that the authors be more explicit when it comes to the reference of "some patients". How many? Lines 157-172: Could the authors elaborate on the response format of the questions on the evaluation form?

Discretionary revisions:
If available, I'd be interested to know more about the patients' (clinic/home) demographic клинический background (educational attainment, occupation, staging, performance status) by including relevant information in Table 1.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.