Reviewer's report

Title: Disentangling rhetoric and reality: an international Delphi study of factors and processes that facilitate the successful implementation of decisions to decommission health care services

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2014

Reviewer: Francois Dionne

Reviewer's report:

Overall, interesting and useful manuscript.

Minor essential revisions:
There are a couple of sentences that should be rewritten
page 8- "From the list generated in round one (see table two), respondents were also asked to identify the three factors that they believe (a) should be and (b) are the most considerations which most influence decommissioning decisions.

page 12- "Overall, therefore, we would therefore draw a parallel between decommissioning process..."

Discretionary revisions:
I suggest addressing the two following issues in the discussion.

1- On page 6 we find this statement: "Open comments provided by participants to explain or support their suggestions included that, in practice, decommissioning decisions are not necessarily always 'evidence-based' (a common theme throughout all three rounds of the Delphi) and, rather, are often driven by a financial (cost-saving) imperative". Throughout the manuscript there is this feeling that there is a 'virtuous' justification for disinvestment: to improve care by discontinuing interventions that provide little or no benefits and thereby saving patients from unnecessary treatment. And the there is a 'pragmatic' (to use a gentle term) justification which is the need to save some money. I believe it would be useful to suggest that in fact the 'pragmatic' justification can lead to better care if it allows the reallocation of funding from interventions that provide little benefits to interventions that provide greater benefits, i.e. the 'financial imperative' can be a means to get to better care.

2- The issue of evidence is paramount in the manuscript. A comment about the distinction between evidence of no-benefits and no evidence of benefits would be useful- the question of where the burden of proof lies.

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