Reviewer’s report

Title: A Cluster Randomised Trial of Alternative Forms of Hydration in Cancer Patients in the Last Days of Life: A Feasibility Study

Version: 1  Date: 12 July 2015

Reviewer: Petronella Ottevanger

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well written study protocol to assess as a primary endpoint the impact of clinical assisted hydration on the occurrence of hyperactive/terminal agitation in end of life cancer patients.

The study is a feasibility study as a start up for a larger study on this subject.

Major comments:

1. As hospitals and hospices frequently have their own pain therapy and terminal schedules with different drugs it is important to stratify hospitals for drugs that elicit agitation more easily than others (e.g. methadon and steroids).

2. The frequency of terminal agitation in the participating hospitals and hospices is not known and only from literature a wide range is given. However this is crucial to assess the numbers needed for this trial. This is not described

3. also wonder whether the test could be 1 sided if it is only to assess the superiority of clinically assisted hydration to prevent terminal agitation

4. The adverse effects of clinically assisted hydration should also be described and how they will be measured.

5. the protocol describes a feasibility study.

Minor:

1. Abbreviation of LCP needs to be explained.

2. I don't understand why they don't restrict to 1 liter for all patients and increase the volume of i.v/s.c. hydration according to weight of the patients

3. I would suggest to exclude patients with untreated brain metastases or tumours.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests are reported by all authors