

Peer Review File

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Reviewer A

I don't have any revision to propose. As we know, in palliative care it is very difficult to have a sufficient number of research participants and this is reflected in your study. I don't know if there are any other qualitative studies like this one and maybe a review can be helpful.

Reply 1: Many thanks for taking the time to review our study.

Changes in the text: Nil

Reviewer B

This is an interesting qualitative study which has investigated integrated clinical service between the local cardiology team at University Hospital and the palliative care team at Hospice was piloted for patients with end-stage heart failure. This study explored views of patients and carers who participated in the integrated pilot service. From this pilot project four key area were mapped 1. being diagnosed and living with heart failure. 2. referral to palliative care. 3. key helpful components of the care received and 4. unhelpful components of the new service in terms of care.

This study has been done with strong background and with sound methodology, the authors have done a phenomenon job extracting the most useful information which has certainly helped readers understand the needs and barriers associated with the integrated clinical service model. The authors have outlined the limitations of the study very well including the small sample of interviews been conducted. This preliminary knowledge will help audiences develop programs which can meet expectations for both the patients and the providers. Such integrated programs are important in helping the healthcare system as it has clearly showed that patients avoided hospital stay yet they still had significant needs which should be meet outside with a well-integrated approach. More research is required to explore these findings with much bigger sample size.

Comment 1: More research is required to explore these findings with much bigger sample size.

Reply 1: Thank you for taking the time to review our study. We agree that further research is required with larger sample sizes to corroborate our small study's findings.

Changes in the text: Nil

Reviewer C

This study explored the views of patients and carers participating in a pilot service for the management of palliative care needs in a population of patients with heart failure in England. The present study reports results from the qualitative part of an overall research project, and investigated the experiences of care and support from the point of view of patients and bereaved carers.

The results are interesting and can provide guidance for other departments or units planning to implement integrated cardiology/palliative care services for heart failure patients.

The authors adequately acknowledge the limitations of their study.

The report is well written overall, although I would suggest that the authors rephrase lines 445-449 - these are not complete sentences, and are a little bit hard to follow. Finally, I would also suggest (unless the journal stipulates otherwise) that the references on lines 358 and 371 be cited as ranges, i.e. 10,12,17-20 (line 358) and 11,15,16,22-33 (line 371).

Comment 1: I would suggest that the authors rephrase lines 445-449 – these are not complete sentences, and are a little bit hard to follow.

Reply 1: Thank you – I can see your point and have changed the structure of the paragraph so that it reads better.

Changes in the text: Secondly is managing uncertainty in an uncertain trajectory, which involves healthcare professionals recognising that a patient is deteriorating and therefore engaging palliative care services early. It also requires educating the wider multidisciplinary team to discuss advance care planning earlier on in the disease trajectory. (Changes have been tracked in the article)

Comment 2: I would also suggest (unless the journal stipulates otherwise) that the references on lines 358 and 371 be cited as ranges, i.e. 10,12,17-20 (line 358) and 11,15,16,22-33 (line 371).

Reply 2: Thank you. I can see from the examples in the submission checklist provided that references can be cited as you suggest.

Changes in the text: I have made the changes as suggested by the reviewer and changes have been tracked in the article.