Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions of Doctor-Nurse Collaborative Practices by Patients with Multimorbidity: A Qualitative Study

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Reviewer: Linda S. Kahn

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Minor Essential Revisions

1. In the Methodology section of the manuscript, the recruitment of patients needs to be clarified. Was a chart review conducted in the various practices to identify patients with 5 or more chronic diseases? Or, did physicians provide the researchers with a list of patients that fit the inclusion criteria?

2. In the Main Findings section, the second sentence should read: Table 1 presents participant demographic characteristics.

3. Figure 1 is confusing and should be revised/simplified or deleted altogether. Three suggestions are as follows: (1) The authors might want to simply list the major themes and specific themes in a one-column table. (2) Construct a simple two-column table with the themes down the left, with the major themes in bold and specific themes listed beneath (similar to current figure). The right column could contain illustrative quotes. (3) A third option is to make a similar two-column table, with the number of times the specific theme was identified in the transcripts in the right-hand column.

Discretionary revisions:

1. Flesh out the first paragraph of the Background -- with the assumption that not all readers are familiar with the multimorbidity literature. Specifically, the authors should consider providing brief examples corroborating the last two sentences. For example: "a number of problems in following up such patients have been identified, including ______________ and ______________." The same approach should be used with the last sentence in paragraph 1: "in the presence of multi-morbidity, providing care to patients becomes much more complicated, and may involve complex medication regimes, multiple laboratory tests, as well as referral and follow-up with specialists" [I am ad-libbing here.....] The point is to illustrate the demands of caring for patients with multimorbidities experienced by primary care providers who also are under time constraints.

2. The authors might consider adding a sentence to the background regarding the shortage of primary care physicians in the US and Canada. In the US, health service providers often mention "doctor extenders:" nurses or physicians assistants (PAs) that can be deployed in place of or as extensions of physicians for routine patient care, including follow-up care. [Do the Groupes de Medicine de
Famille represent a Québec version of the "medical home model" currently being promoted in the US?

3. In the Methodology section, the researchers mention an interview guide that they developed. They might want to consider including this guide as an Appendix to the manuscript so that other researchers, conducting similar projects, might adapt it (or build on the present study).

4. Consider adding the following to the limitations section:

   • Relatively small sample size
   • Emphasize that the study is limited to a province that is undergoing changes in the development/expansion of the nurse practitioners profession. I differ with the authors regarding the importance of the regional component here. As noted in the methodology section the data was collected before "nurse practitioner" became an established profession in Québec. This is a very important distinction between Québec and other parts of Canada and the US.
   • By definition, all subjects in the study had multimorbidities and had "various experiences of collaborative practices." This is already noted in the limitations. However, I would also add that the limitations of the study did not allow for inclusion or comparison of non-complex patients, without multimorbidities: younger patients who might only see their health care provider once a year or for minor ailments.

5. Consider adding to discussion: Future research might consider replicating this study in Ontario, parts of the US, and in Québec today to assess the acceptability of nurse practitioners as part of the primary care team.

6. Some suggested edits:

   Page 4: "Combining perspectives of applied anthropology in primary care clinical practice, clinical research questions patients' viewpoints to better inform practice." I would change the sentence to read: Combining perspectives of applied anthropology in primary care clinical practice, clinical research elicits patients' viewpoints to better inform practice.

   Page 6: "Nevertheless, we were able to classify participants regarding their openness to collaboration and found them receptive for the majority (13/18)." I would change the sense to read: Nevertheless, we were able to classify participants regarding their openness to collaboration and found the majority to be receptive (13/18).

   Page 11: "Among other conditions for optimal doctor-nurse collaboration that emerged in the analyses, we should mention the nurse's proper use of health care protocols and the employment stability of healthcare professionals." Do the authors mean "employment stability" or continuity of care provided by healthcare professionals?

Additional comments:
This is a well-done and important study -- both in light of the primary care shortage in the US and Canada, the medical home movement in the United States, and the acceptance and establishment of the nurse practitioners in Québec. This article will be of great interest to nurses, in addition to primary care and family medicine doctors. Perhaps it can also be referenced on the BMC Nursing site.

An "outsiders" observation on the findings: Although the research question focuses on "collaborative practices," it appears that the patients interviewed in the study were primarily concerned with the changing role (e.g., increased responsibilities and authority) of the nurse. I wonder whether if this study were undertaken in the US (or another part of Canada) where nurse practitioners have been in place for many years (and in some states can open their own practices), the results would be similar.

**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.