Reviewer's report

Title: Why are family carers of people with dementia dissatisfied with general hospital care? A qualitative study

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Reviewer: Jackie Bridges

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript that reports a qualitative study of family carers' views on their experiences of hospital care. This is a topic of importance, given the high use of acute hospital services by people with dementia, and the concerns raised in previous studies about the quality of general hospital care for people with dementia. The authors are right to note that there has not previously been a study that has focused on gaining an in-depth study of the views of family carers.

The study is well designed and executed to address the research question, although there are some details missing. I classify all of these as minor essential revisions:

1. The authors mention an ethnographic study (p.4) and I assume that the interview data presented in this manuscript are a sub-set of that ethnographic study, but it would be helpful to know a little more about the ethnographic study.

2. This leads to my next point about sampling. I am interested to understand more about how the final sample of 96 family carers approached for interview was arrived at. The authors report that 250 patients thought likely to have a mental health problem on the basis of screening were recruited to a follow-up study. I assume the interview population was drawn from family carers linked to this original sample of 250 but the manuscript does not make this clear, or does not report how decisions were made about who to approach for interview. In addition, the results clearly report the perspectives of family carers of people with dementia, not people “thought likely to have a mental health problem on the basis of screening”. The authors do not make it clear that focusing on people with dementia was the purpose of sampling.

3. In relation to the interview method reported, it would be helpful to have a copy of the original topic guide or a description of the questioning focus. The authors state that the interviews were about “experiences of hospital care” but this is too broad to understand how then data collection was focused.

4. The results are clearly reported and result in a useful framework being presented, the “cycle of discontent”, that is a helpful description of family carers’ patterns of behaviour as they become increasingly angry and mistrustful. The implications for practice are clearly drawn out. My comment relates to data that I can’t see being reported. The authors state that family carers’ experiences were variable but then only the negative experiences are reported and used to inform
the development of the framework presented. Are there any examples of positive experiences and helpful practices in the data, and if so, what can be learned about how the cycle of discontent could be prevented or halted? If the authors continue to focus solely on the negative experiences, I think they need to give rationale for this, given that they report that experiences were variable.

**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 I have no competing interests