Reviewer's report

Title: Restraint use in home care: a qualitative study from a nursing perspective

Version: 1 Date: 21 August 2013

Reviewer: Claudia Lai

Reviewer's report:

I have considered the following points:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? - No, research question is unclear
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? - The use of a qualitative approach is appropriate but there are other parts of the methods described that need revision
3. Are the data sound? Can’t be determined. The authors stated that they use QUAGOL (Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven) but the results reported are more like major categories of information than themes.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? I think that the authors are trying to fit into the standard reporting format required by BMC geriatrics.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes, the paper has some good points.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? No.
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? I believe so.
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Acceptable.
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This should be a topic of interest to those in the field and I think it is important to consider the use of restraint at the patients’ home too. My biggest concern as I read through the paper is that I am unclear as to exactly what were the research questions asked.

It was stated that "Because research about restraint use in home care is scarce, the aim of this study was to gain a first insight in the use of restraints in home care in Flanders (Belgium) from the perspective of home nurses." Then there are no more descriptions about the questions asked of the nurses. Without any clear exposition of the research questions and the interview guide, a reviewer will not be able to determine if the results/findings have addressed the intended questions although of course people can guess. However in a research report,
everything has to be explicit.

2. Another major concern is about sampling. In qualitative studies, the important element in sampling is to find those suitable informants. I agree with the authors that purposive sampling is the method of choice. The authors randomly choose the districts and then asked the head nurses to select home care nurses who met the recruitment criteria. The potential participants were then called to confirm their voluntariness to participate in the study. This is probably acceptable. But the sampling strategy needs to be better explained. Nomination is by the head nurse is not the best strategy in sampling even though the participants were later confirmed to be voluntary. The voluntariness is not the same as the voluntary consent we commonly understood in research because the presence of power differential between the head nurse and the participants.

3. Also why 13 participants? There is no explanation as to why recruitment has stopped at 13 participating nurses. As a general rule of thumb in QUAL studies except for phenomenology, we expect around 25-30 participants.

4. I appreciate the researchers spent lots of efforts in detailed analysis. I still have some reservations about the coherence of the methods being used. The findings reported were 1) Restraints in home care: an ambiguous concept; and (2) Characteristics of restraint use in home care (types, reasons, persons involved). It appears more like a content analysis to me than the QUAGOL processes being described. No themes and only major categories of information are identified. Types of restraint use, who decides, etc. are not themes.

- Minor Essential Revisions

5. When presenting the findings (QUAL reports in general do not use "Results" but "Findings", should introduce the overall findings for the readers before describing in details the findings - like a topic sentence/paragraph to provide an overall picture.

- Discretionary Revisions

6. The authors have tried their best to explain the home health services in Belgium. Some restructuring of the ideas will be beneficial, such as explaining the system right at the beginning may be helpful. I have to read till the end of the description and back and forth several times to better understand the meaning of "autonomous practice of nursing". Rewriting to streamline the description will indeed help the reader to better understand.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'