Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions and actions of healthcare professionals regarding mother-child relationship in an intermediate neonatal intensive care unit: a qualitative study

Version: 3 Date: 3 June 2014

Reviewer: Cara Bicking Kinsey

Reviewer's report:

The authors have revised their manuscript to reflect the suggestions of the reviewers. Specifically, they have clarified that the population of infants was entirely premature infants. Also, they have greatly improved the manuscript with respect to the use of the theoretical framework of holding, and have consistently referred to holding throughout the manuscript. It is clear to me now how holding guides the study design and fits the results. They have also added one limitation. The authors improved some aspects of their methods section by adding clarity about the thematic analysis process and removing the confusing idea of categories of analysis.

Despite the improvements that were made to the manuscript, I still have several concerns. First, now that I see their revisions did not address this issue, I feel very strongly that the authors did not complete a phenomenological study. They do not follow phenomenological methods or cite any methodological references for this type of study.

Furthermore, the portions of the manuscript that are newly written are often grammatically awkward, and do not read as clearly as the original. I feel that there are editorial issues that remain, and should be addressed such as unclear sentences, sentences that are too long, missing words, and extra words. Some of these I detail in the sections below.

Also, I originally was concerned that the discussion section did not detail the way in which this research should be translated into practice. I don’t think the authors have adequately addressed this. Perhaps clarification and/or expansion on their last sentence would help. This final sentence does not make sense to me as it is currently written.

I consider the above recommendations and those that follow to all be Minor Essential Revisions.

In the title and abstract the term mother-child relationship is used. I believe it would be more appropriate to say “the mother-child relationship”, as they do in the rest of the manuscript.

In the abstract under Methods, the first sentence is incomplete.

The issues of consistent use of “their” and “her” still remain, often with instances
of inconsistency in the same sentence. For example, in the abstract and again in the Results (i.e. “They felt a great need to touch and hold her baby and when they were able to do so they became calmer.”)

The last sentence of the abstract does not read clearly. I think an “and” may be missing?

Second paragraph under Background has this statement with extra words, “and this interferes with the way how they interact”

This sentence is worded very awkwardly, “Recent studies have evidenced the importance of the care, support and the relationship established between nurses, the newborn infant and their parents, both mothers and fathers, in the environment of neonatal care units”

In the objective they say, “support of the HCPs for the development of this relationship”. However, that makes it seem that the HCPs are being supported. It should be re-worded such that it reads that the HCPs are giving support to the parents.

From the first paragraph under Type of Study, this isn’t clear, “This approach permitted to hear the stories”. Also, in the same sentence, “their mothers”….is this referring to the HCPs?

In the next paragraph, you define NICU. This does not make sense to me. You completed the study in your NICU; there is no need for a definition of a NICU. I suggest you just tell the reader a little more about your NICU following the first sentence in that paragraph.

The last sentence under Data Analysis is not clear.

Last sentence, first paragraph under Results has a typo (were->where).

I appreciate that the authors have added, as requested, a statement to the Methods section that says interviews were conducted in Portuguese. However, they have not said who translated the quotes into English for the publication; knowing the fluency of this person would help with credibility. After translation were the quotes also back-translated by another person and verified either by a researcher or the participants themselves?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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