Reviewer's report

Title: Constructions of sex and intimacy after cancer: A Q methodology study of people with cancer, their partners, and health professionals

Version: 2 Date: 18 March 2013

Reviewer: Jennifer Reese

Reviewer's report:

In general I think the authors have done an excellent job of responding to the reviewers' critiques and improving their manuscript. Overall, the manuscript is very well-written and adds to the literature about perspectives of sexuality in cancer, an important topic.

Although the authors have responded quite well to the comments about not inferring behaviors from attitudes, I continue to feel that the discussion of findings, particularly Factor 1, could be improving by adding several additional points of discussion.

Discretionary Revisions:

The major points I feel might round out the discussion of the findings from Factor 1, are: 1) an emphasis on the fact that many of the health care professionals were mental health professionals who are likely to be more open in their attitude about discussing sex, and that more research is needed on the perspectives of oncologists and nurses with regard to discussing sexuality; 2) despite that the attitudes came out in this study as generally very open to discuss sex and alternative practices, there is much research indicating (at least outside of Australia) that patient-provider communication about sex in cancer samples other than prostate continues to be rare. (see Flynn, K. et al., 2012, Patient experiences with communication about sex during and after treatment for cancer). If nothing else, adding in a statement about how such discussions continue to be rare, and/or relating the findings of the study with other research on actual reports of behavior, would be helpful. 3) The authors might want to point out that the responses may be unique to Australian practices. For instance, it seems to me that the government in Australia has done a better job at promoting patient-provider discussion about sex, including through posting modules for educating health professionals about discussing sexuality for gynecological cancer patients, on their website, relative to other countries (or at least the U.S). No such modules exist in the U.S., and thus the findings, may be particular to the country in which the study was conducted. This is not a limitation of the study as I see it, but a discussion placing the findings in context could be helpful for an international audience.

In addition, a statement discussing research on those cancer patients who struggle with sex...and are not able to "renegotiate sexuality" within the context of
cancer would be helpful in the Discussion section as I continue to feel that the perspectives of such patients are a bit lost here.

Otherwise, I am generally pleased with this manuscript and feel that this would make a welcome contribution to the literature on this important subject.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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 have no conflicts of interest to report.