Reviewer's report

Title: What matters most to people with multiple myeloma? A qualitative study of views on quality of life.

Version: 2  Date: 25 April 2014

Reviewer: Debra Howell

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions
None. The paper was interesting and addresses important issues. The research questions were clear and the findings well described.

Minor essential revisions
I was a little confused about the purpose of focus groups, which did not seem to be clearly described other than that they 'complemented' the semi-structured interviews (e.g. lines 53 and 130). These were conducted after semi-structured interviews had commenced, therefore were not used to guide development of the semi-structured interview topics and there is no mention of them being used to generate a different type of data through interaction between participants; were they simply a method of triangulation, or were you following the guidelines recommended by Brod? More discussion about their purpose would be useful.

Line 93: I think it would be useful if you describe more about the context of the Wilson and Cleary model (e.g. was it developed for cancer/all diseases etc.), as you draw on it later in the study.

Line 262: I presume the participants specifically consented to the use verbatim quotations, but it may be useful to say this directly.

Line 268-9: I wondered why so many participants were recruited from Kings College Hospital and so few from Guys Hospital? I'm not sure this was explained, or whether it was important?

Discretionary revisions
Lines 52/53: I wasn't sure you needed to present the number of people attending the focus groups in the abstract. I found the number of focus groups/people/topics (issues and questionnaire) somewhat confusing here, although there are typos on this line and it may be clearer when these are corrected.

I was a little surprised that the focus groups with patients did not generate any different insights at all (e.g. lines 282 and 499 onwards). I agree that focus groups are not always needed alongside interviews; these have different purposes and generate different data and the method used should be that which is most appropriate for the research question. However, presenting this as you
have gives the impression that the focus groups were slightly worthless afterthoughts and this undermines your study methodology somewhat. You possibly need to argue your case more fully here.

Line 321: Do you mean the theoretical model of QOL developed in this study?

Line 505: you state that no new issues arose in the focus groups, but I presume this relates to the patient meetings, as you present new material from the focus groups with clinical staff. Incidentally, you only conducted one focus group with clinical staff, but the reason for this was not explained/justified.

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.