Reviewer's report

Title: Pediatrician's Perspectives on Discharging Against Medical Advice (DAMA) among Pediatric Patients: A Qualitative Study

Version: 2 Date: 11 November 2011

Reviewer: Eberechukwu Onukwugha

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript reports on a qualitative study with the objective of identifying attitudes of pediatric residents towards discharges against medical advice in the pediatric population. The manuscript provides information that is lacking in the literature regarding physician attitudes towards pediatric discharges against medical advice.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. Background section: The author should clarify whether the rates provided for the Singapore institution and Zamboanga City Medical Center refer to pediatric discharges against medical advice.

2. Background section: please clarify what is meant by ‘inconvenience of hospitalization’ and ‘dissatisfaction with management’. Are the authors referring to a situation where the parent has obligations outside the hospital? Are the authors referring to a situation where the parent is dissatisfied with the quality of care received?

3. Methods: were the residents reimbursed for their participation? How long did the focus group last? How were the residents recruited (i.e. by whom/using what medium)? Was there a conceptual framework that guided the development of the topic guide?

4. Methods: more detail on the content analysis is needed. Was the content analysis conducted by more than 1 individual? How were themes defined/identified? Were there reasons/attitudes discussed that did not qualify as themes?

5. Results/Discussion: Combining Results with Discussion makes it difficult to identify the results from the focus group interview. Unless required by the journal, can the authors separate out these two sections?

6. There is no limitations section in the manuscript.

Minor essential revisions:

1. The acronym DAMA is defined as ‘discharging against medical advice’ in the Background section and used throughout the manuscript. However, ‘discharging against medical advice’ seems awkward in many instances where ‘DAMA’ is used throughout the manuscript (e.g. “DAMA rates…”) so the author might consider revising the definition of DAMA.
2. The Background section needs to be tightened further in terms of the literature review and the stated research problem. The literature review in the Background section mixes studies of adult discharges against medical advice and pediatric discharges against medical advice, making it difficult to know whether the focus is on adult/pediatric discharges against medical advice or strictly on pediatric discharges against medical advice. The introduction identifies a few literature gaps not all of which are addressed in the study. For example, the author notes that few studies examine ‘how physicians experience and perceive’ requests for a discharge against medical advice and then also note the need to study the physician-patient relationship as a factor in explaining discharges against medical advice. The discussion about the physician-patient relationship does not seem to be consistent with the stated objective of the study nor does the study (e.g. the focus group guide) focus on the physician-patient relationship.

Discretionary revisions:
1. Background: Are HPR rates available for ZCMC over the same time period (2005 to 2010)?
2. Results: did the author collect demographic information on the residents: age, gender, level of training?
3. Discussion: The observations regarding the inconsistent use of DAMA and the differences between HPR and DAMA are very interesting and have implications for documenting DAMA and HPR rates at ZCMC as well as at other institutions where similar inconsistencies in definition/utilization exist. Does the author have specific suggestions regarding what can be done to ensure more uniform use of these discharge categories?

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

**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.