Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 13 March 2012

Reviewer: Saskia Juenger

Reviewer's report:

Overall comment

The manuscript Pediatricians' Perspectives on Discharging Against Medical Advice (DAMA) among Pediatric Patients: A Qualitative Study has clearly improved to a high degree after revision by the author. Both from the cover letter addressing the reviewers' comments item per item, as well as from the revised manuscript itself it becomes clear that the author has worked considerably to improve the quality of the paper. It is much better structured and better readable; it highlights the methods and results more transparently and brings across the impact of the findings much clearer. The paper reads very well now and it is very interesting to read. The importance of this study in terms of its implications for paediatric practice and its impact for the education of residents with respect to DAMA become even more evident after the manuscript's revision.

In my view the author has addressed all major issues sufficiently well to allow her manuscript to be published.

There are only a few minor essential / discretionary revisions that could help to improve the paper before publishing it.

Minor essential revisions

1. In the section “Analysis” to me it is still not clear how themes were identified through “deduction”. The term “deduction” implies that several hypotheses or theoretical concepts were a priori defined and supposed to be identified in the data from the focus group discussion. This may be true but then it needs to be made transparent which concepts were hypotheses were used for the deduction. This might also help to place the following sentence in a clearer context (“Each theme was identified and re-coded if necessary”) and make it more transparent how exactly themes were identified and why it may have been necessary to re-code them.

2. Moreover, from the results section I assume that there were also new themes emerging from the focus group discussion that could not be presumed based on previous studies (for example, the parents’ wish to bring their child to a traditional healer). Therefore I wonder whether it would not be more appropriate saying that themes were identified both through deduction (based on concepts previously derived from the literature / other sources) and induction (when new themes emerged from the data material).
3. Discussion section: The third sentence says “However, in contrast to most definitions used elsewhere, the paediatricians required that the prognosis of the medical condition is poor.” I wondered whether it might be helpful to provide a possible explanation for this finding.

4. In the discussion section the finding that the residents did not regard dissatisfaction with the attending physician as a possible factor in a DAMA request is now being very well discussed. However, possible limitations to openness of the focus group participants due to the fact that all respondents were from the same institution / team were not addressed.


6. The writing of this paper and the quality of the English has improved considerably. There are still a few issues that might be corrected. I am not a native speaker, therefore I am not certain - but I have enumerated some topics that I think are not correct (this list may not be complete):

   # In paragraph “Data collection”, second sentence it says “The author explained to the pediatric residents about the objectives.....”. I am not sure whether “about” is appropriate here or whether it should rather be: “The author explained the objectives of the research to the residents and emphasised ...”.

   # In several instances, it appears incorrect to me how the word “however” is embedded in a sentence. For example, in the results section, last sentence of the paragraph on the second major factor affecting the residents’ decision making it says “For example, for a terminal case of cancer where the parent requests discharge, some would sign out as HPR apparently because the resident feels there is not much that they can do to help but the patient is stable however, if the diagnosis...”. I am not sure but I think instead it should be “.... that they can do to help but the patient is stable. However, if the diagnosis...”: Another example is the first sentence of the discussion section. Here it says “Discharge against medical advice (DAMA) is a known phenomenon in different settings around the world and is clearly defined among adult patients however, its application...”. Here in my view it should be: “...is clearly defined among adult patients. However, its application...”. Same issue in the first sentence of the conclusion section.

   # Second last paragraph of the discussion section: “Being limited to resident pediatric trainees in a hospital catering to the low income group, the perspectives shared by the subjects in this study do (instead of does) not reflect those of ....”.

   # Sometimes the term “watcher” is used (for example in the results section starting with “The fourth major factor...” in the quotation illustrating the decision to sign out as HPR). I think this term has a different meaning in English (assuming that here “caregiver” is meant). Therefore I would suggest either replacing it or including a footnote explaining that in Filipino dialect this means “caregiver”.
Discretionary revisions

1. Paragraph “Data collection” and first paragraph of “Results” section: It is very interesting for the reader to learn about the ethnicity and dialects of the residents. However, this information cannot be understood by someone who is not familiar with these cultures. Therefore, I wondered whether a small footnote or a reference with a short explanation on the different / most important ethnic groups in the Philippines might be helpful – especially since in the last sentence of the discussion section it is suggested to focus on the different tribal groups in the country and compare cultural factors.

2. In my view, the results section has gained considerably by including quotations from the focus group discussion. It helps to illustrate the categories and enhance the transparency of the findings and of the categories derived from the data. Moreover, it also makes it clearer whether certain statements in the paper result from the focus group discussion itself or are general observations. I only wondered whether it will be necessary to include the original wording in the respective mother tongue in the text itself (although it is very interesting to read this and learn something about the dialects). It might enhance the readability of the results section only to include the English translations. As an alternative – in order to do justice to the original data material - a table with a full list of quotations in the original dialect and the English translation might be provided in the annex of the paper.

3. Just a minor suggestion regarding the order of sentences in the discussion section, third paragraph starting with “Two factors that the paediatricians consider in giving...”: I would suggest the following order since this seems more logical to me: “Two factors that the paediatricians consider in giving the DAMA order are their perception of the kind of care that the child will receive at home and the attitude of the caregiver towards the medical team. However, being a subjective parameter, a family may be misjudged by one paediatrician and may not be guided properly in the treatment of their child. This appraisal is underlined by the finding that two paediatricians described one situation differently during the focus group discussion. Therefore, in cases like this it may be advantageous to have more than one paediatrician handling the case as this can provide a more objective view of the family’s reactions and perspectives.”

4. Another minor suggestion, next paragraph starting with “When a patient is re-admitted...”: In the sentence “Moreover, they maintain a helpful attitude in trying to mediate the situation to encourage parents to continue until completion of treatment of their children” it might be helpful to add “continue cure / therapy / medication until completion of treatment...”.

5. Conclusion, second last sentence: the wording “watch(ing) out” is repeated quite often. I know this sentence was also my own suggestion – nevertheless, after reading it over now I would suggest modifying it in order not to have too many repetitions. Proposal: “Physicians, especially paediatricians, being in the service of taking care of the welfare of a vulnerable group (children) are often torn between watching out and fighting for what they think will be appropriate for their patients according to medical practice, giving in to the wishes of the parents...”
and caregivers, and at the same time having to pay attention to their own protection against liabilities.”

**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.