Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring the Usefulness of Comprehensive Care Plans for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC): A Qualitative Study

Version: 2 Date: 21 October 2012

Reviewer: Linda Lindeke

Reviewer’s report:

Review Comments: Section A:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? The authors share insights from parents and health care providers about the usefulness of shared plans of care for children with complex conditions. Authors state in the abstract that care plan “value and utility have not been studied”. In fact, there are studies of care plans that the authors would find helpful to integrate into this article’s background and conclusion section:


That said, this study by Adams et al odes indeed add to the literature on a topic that is not addressed in the studies above, namely, the parents’ and providers’ perspectives regarding the care plan’s usefulness. While acknowledging the difficulty of creating and updating care plans, the results of this study are positive and provide justification for the time and effort expenditure to implement comprehensive, cross-institutional care plan use for complex care situations.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? The methods are...
well-described, and classic references are cited to justify the selection of this method. The sample is appropriate regarding the patient/parent selection. The professional sample is typical for the types of health care providers who typically care for children with complex conditions.

3. Are the data sound? The results are provided in a manner that supports the conclusions with themes and key illustrative quotes. The manuscript includes a model that is helpful in illustrating the relationships between the themes in the data. In addition a typical care plan is included that will be useful to readers who are not familiar with complex care in pediatrics.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? This is a relatively standard approach to reporting grounded theory research findings.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? The conclusions do not go beyond the study findings. There could be greater elaboration about the barriers to care plan sharing across settings, as well as some mention of the danger of providers accessing care plans that are outdated. An incorrect care plan may be worse than no care plan at all. The key issue of who is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of a shared care plan is critical and must be addressed in the conclusion of this paper.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Limitations are discussed in terms of the sample. This section could be enhanced by also stating that this study occurred in Canada where there is universal access to care; other countries’ health systems might have fewer or greater barriers, depending on the structure of health records, the system of support of families, and the accountability and responsibilities of care providers.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? The authors would benefit from referring to the studies cited in #1 that describe care plan processes and outcomes to varying degrees.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes; the writing is clear and grammatical, with logical flow and good use of headings and subheadings as well as figures and appropriate quotes.

Review Comments Section B:

1. There are no major compulsory revisions.

2. Minor compulsory revisions: Add further citations and reduce the claim that this is the first such study.

3. Discretionary revisions: Consider more discussion of safety concerns if out-of-date care plans are accessed; consider discussing the difficulty of accountability for care planning and updating care plans.

4. Level of interest: Moderate; important in health care reform globally

**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