Reviewer's report

Title: Utilization of the Atraumatic Restorative Treatment approach in a group of public oral health operators in South Africa: a 5-year longitudinal study

Version: 2 Date: 11 March 2009

Reviewer: Nicky Kilpatrick

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to re-review this manuscript. The authors have made significant changes to address some of the issues previously described. In particular the fuller description of the context makes the study more meaningful to the reader.

The issue of the 8 operators who did not adopt ART remains unclear but can be addressed simply at the start of the results section where it is now not clear that of the 21 operators who attended the training, 2 left and 8 failed to adopt ART. In this revised manuscript no where does it actually state this.

From then on the results can pertain accurately to the 11 left. In addition the inclusion of reference 20 Mickenautsch et al 2007 on the barriers to adoption of ART is very helpful. It would be useful to make note in the discussion on page 9 that 8 operators did not adopt ART and then go on to use Ref 20 by way of an explanation.

The aim of the study as described at the end of the background section is now appropriate however this should be reflected in the background sentence in the abstract. Currently this sentence still implies that the study follows all the operators who were trained - it does not it is following the utilisation patterns of those operators who adopted ART after training and indeed specifically excludes those that did not adopt at all.

There are a couple of further grammatical queries;

i) page 4 line 18 - '..five districts in this province...' --- which province?

ii) page 4 line 24 - '..increase in both dentitions...' might be better '..increase in either dentition...'

iii) page 5 line 1 - '..operators showed to have ...' would be better 'operators were found to have...'

iv) page 9 line 9 - 'This indicates that operators preferred...' should be 'This indicates that these operators preferred..

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