Author's response to reviews

Title: A qualitative study of Shared Care in the delivery of palliative care services in the community: Applying a scalar approach

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript, entitled ‘A qualitative study examining the Sustainability of Shared Care in the delivery of palliative care services in the community’. We have seriously considered the reviewers reports and have significantly revised the paper accordingly. As there was little overlap between the two reviewers’ suggestions, we have done our best to address each of the individual suggestions made by each of the two reviewers. The revisions made are outlined in point form below; we begin with Reviewer 2 as these have implications on the revisions suggested by Reviewer 1:

Reviewer 2:

- the scalar themes are now specifically highlighted as common prioritized themes in the methods section:
  - “The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher (LD) examined each of the transcripts thoroughly through multiple readings. During the readings, recurring themes were documented in an iterative process. Similar to Giesbrecht et al.’s [25] study, participants repeatedly used prioritized scalar categories to articulate their responses. In particular, in discussing factors affecting the sustainability of teams, participants commonly used the terms “community”, “LHIN” and “province” as points of reference. As a result, thematic coding [37] involved the grouping of interview data according to these three common scalar categories.”

- as suggested, Figure 1 has been omitted; leaving Figures 2 and 3 now numbered as Figures 1 and 2, respectively; the latter two figures were kept in to provide an illustration of the scales of concern, as well as a comparative reflection of the changes needed for the sustainability of the PC shared care team.

- Table 3 has now been removed and, as indicated by the reviewer, only those specific recommendations linked to the qualitative research data are highlighted in the text (one per scalar category)

Reviewer 1:

- The two occurrences of its’ have been replaced with its.

- Examples of questions asked of the representative groups of participants are now provided in the methods section.

- Although the Review suggests that ‘health delivery context’ is a theme, it is actually not a thematic result (as suggested by Reviewer 1) but rather the socio-political health care contextual framing of the study; this is required upfront, particularly given the international readership as its presentation early in the paper sets the healthcare landscape for the study of concern.
Similarly, ‘sustainability’ is not a thematic result (as suggested by Reviewer 1) but rather the key concept being examined in this study; reviewing how the concept has been defined and used in the health care literature is therefore required, making up the introductory review of literature in such a research paper.

The reviewer suggests that the purpose or objective of the paper is ‘an enquiry into the factors that supported or threatened the sustainability of these teams’; this is only partially correct, as the aim of the study, as outlined in the paper, is:

- “… twofold: (1) to explore the factors that affect the sustainability of the teams, and; (2) based on the results of this study, propose recommendations that will contribute to the sustainability of PC teams.”

Greater coherence has been achieved by moving the section addressing scale into the ‘Results and Discussion’ section given that the three scalar categories of concern emerged from the data analysis; this coherence is now reflected in the title change (‘A qualitative study examining the Sustainability of Shared Care in the delivery of palliative care services in the community’) , as well as the concluding section.

Thank you once again for providing us with the opportunity to revise and resubmit this manuscript. I trust that the paper has been strengthened as a result of the revisions made, as suggested by your expert reviewers. Please do not hesitate to contact me further as needed.

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