Author's response to reviews

Title: Hope against hope: Exploring the hopes and challenges of rural female caregivers of persons with advanced cancer

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

Thank you for sending us the reviewers’ comments. We have made editorial changes as suggested and have used track changes to highlight them in the revised manuscript. An itemized list below addresses the comments:

**Reviewer #1:**

1. Strengthen the rationale and explanation for the analysis:

The reviewer’s suggestions and our response to the suggestions for further developing the analysis and presenting a stronger rationale with our comments are listed below:

   - Clarify research purpose and aim

We have added two specific aims to the end of the literature review. As suggested we have clarified how this analysis is related to the evaluation of the Living with Hope Program in the introduction.

   - Use a constructiveness perspective.

The reviewer is correct the purpose of this study does not reflect a constructiveness perspective as it is descriptive in nature and consistent with this portion of the study. In keeping with Cortazzi’s narrative analysis approach, we viewed the “Stories of the Present” as structures of knowledge and storied ways of knowing (p. 384). The “Stories of the Present” is a very short and directive type of journaling (instructed to take 5 minutes at the end of each day). In reading Funk and Stadjuhar’s (2009) article, our work would have been considered positivist in nature. As this was part of a mixed-method study whose emphasis was on the quantitative design, with the qualitative data informing the quantitative data, the positivist paradigm would appear to be appropriate. Thus, the purpose of the study, the approach chosen and the data collection and analysis are currently congruent. To change the study purpose etc., following a constructiveness perspective would possibly not maintain the integrity of the study.

*Additional information on the mixed method study was included to clarify the context of the current approach to this portion of the study. As well it was added to the discussion as suggested by the reviewer as a study limitation*

We also believe that by clarifying the study research purpose and adding aims, that this will also decrease the confusion about the analysis and concerns regarding the breath versus depth of the analysis. Cortazzi’s method is founded in ethnography which looks a breath rather than depth.
Examine how the LWHP facilitated a process of cognitively reframing their experience.

This is a good suggestion for future research, in which the purpose is to describe the mechanisms by which the LWHP facilitated increasing hope and quality of life. A suggestion for future research was added to the limitation section.

The authors refer to the benefits of journaling, etc. – it may be useful either in the literature review or discussion section to refer to the tradition of “narrative therapy” in narrative gerontology, with specific references (I believe Gary Kenyon and William Randall have both done work on this in Canada)

What is suggested, specific to narrative therapy in narrative gerontology is similar to narrative autobiography. This is not the purpose of this portion of the study. We have included a more generalist reference to the potential therapeutic impact of journaling and have clarified that narrative autobiography was not the purpose of the study.

Is this a secondary analysis?

“Secondary analysis is the re-analysis of either qualitative or quantitative data already collected in a previous study, by a different researcher normally wishing to address a new research question”. [Payne, G & Payne, J (2004). Key Concepts in social Research, pages 214-219. Sage Publications Doi: 10.4125/9781849209397. Retried online at http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/key-concepts-in-social-research]. Based on this definition, this manuscript is not a secondary analysis, but rather the planned analysis of the qualitative data from our study. It is the first and only analysis of the qualitative data collected.

2. Introduction/Background

Stronger rationale for the study of hope needed and it’s connection to ‘relational and contextual’ factors.

The authors have published a metasynthesis study of hope of family caregivers of persons with chronic illness. The findings describe the significant for a study of hope and also the rationale for connection to relational and contextual factors. This was added as suggested to the introduction.


This was added as suggested to the discussion.

4. Data collection
How participants were recruited was added to the data collection, justification for women and sample size was added as requested under a new heading: sample.

5. Data Analysis:

The following were added to the analysis section as requested:

Who participated in the analysis was also added to the analysis section

Justification for the method

Clarification of the thematic analysis and the relationship to the final narrative

Clarification was given to table 1 which illustrates the analysis stages 1 and 2 and how the findings were represented in the narrative by bolding sentences in the narrative.

6. Findings

We clarified the interconnection of the themes to hope: additional information was provided in the first paragraph in the findings section.

Subheadings were added to the hope section and additional quotes were added to substantiate the findings.

We clarification of how the themes presented are illustrated in the story.

7. Discussion

Coping and Hope; A statement was added to the discussion with a reference to let the readers know there is a difference between coping and hope and clarified our reference to coping

Impact of the film on the content of the journal- a sentence was added to the limitation section about its possible impact.

Influence on gender: an additional sentence was added to the limitation section as requested.

8. Conclusion- As suggested two sentences were added about the nature and construction of hope to the conclusion.

Reviewer #1 Minor Essential Revisions

9. Introduction/Background: Minor writing issues: please rephrase “one way to capture”; see misspelling of “written participant journals” on the first page. This was corrected.
10. Literature Review: A clear transition sentence is needed between the sections on ‘experiences of caregiving’ and ‘caregiving and hope.’

ADDED “Hope is a psychosocial and spiritual resource that has been found to help family caregivers in managing the challenges of caregiving.”

11. Lit Review typo, first sentence of ‘caregiving and hope’ – ‘its relationships to’

This was corrected.

12. Towards the end of the literature review a statement here or earlier is needed to clarify the rationale for why or whether the nature of the concept may differ in situations of advanced cancer. A statement was added at the end of the literature review as requested.

13. I suggest that the first two sentences of the method subsection, and the last paragraph, could be moved to the section describing the analysis.

This was completed

14. The method section notes that narratives are being recognized in palliative care but focuses on the value re: that health care professionals can respond to the stories. The fact that story telling/writing can be therapeutic for the person writing/telling it should also be touched on here (it is mentioned elsewhere but fits in the rationale here). This was added here and expanded somewhat in the discussion.

15. See typo/error in last sentence of the data collection section in brackets. – corrected

16. At the start of the findings section, please provide a brief roadmap statement for the reading outlining how the findings will be presented. Additional sentences were added to outline how the findings will be presented.

17. Findings section: A sub header before the presentation of the story might be helpful, as well as a transition sentence. This was added.

Reviewer #2: Reviewer's report:
1. The exact question is not posed clearly in the paper although it is possible to infer the question from the background literature presented.

_The purpose was added to the abstract and two specific aims were added in the manuscript._

2. Table 1 is mentioned for a second time (first time in the data collection section see comments below). _There is only one table, so the reference to the demographic table in the methods section has been deleted._

3. People unfamiliar with the narrative approach may require further detail of this process and the rationale. _Further detail of the narrative process and rationale was added in the methods section._

4. I am not entirely sure what the significance of these bold sections is to the overall narrative or why they have been highlighted. Some further explanation of this may be helpful to the reader.

_A sentence was added to clarify that the bolded statements reflect the themes from each of the categories of the narrative to correlate them to Table 1. (See Table 1)_

5. I am not sure how the rural aspect is covered other than that the participants were from rural communities. One of the claims in the abstract is that journaling may be particular useful for rural participants but this is not really well discussed in the discussion section and could be expanded on.

_This is more fully elaborated on in the discussion section._

6. In the data collection section there appears to be a repeat of information about the average/mean age of participants. _This was corrected._

We would like to thank the reviewers’ for their comments as we feel that the revised manuscript is significantly improved.