Reviewer's report

Title: "It's alright to ask for help", developing competence, preparedness and confidence in family carers providing end of life care: findings from a qualitative study with carers and nursing staff.

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2013

Reviewer: Paul Sinfield

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Is the question posed original, important and well defined?
I found myself confused about the purpose of the paper. The aim as stated in the Methods section was “to explore the information and support needs of family carers”. However, this is not reflected in the title of the paper which is about developing competence etc.
"It's alright to ask for help", developing competence, preparedness and confidence in family carers providing end of life care: findings from a qualitative study with carers and nursing staff.

While one solution may be to revise the aim of the paper I am not sure that this could be done without changing the results which at present are more in line with the aim than title. In the Discussion the authors appear as interested in discussing the need to develop an educational resource as in the implications of the reported results. The authors need to review the paper so that the aim, the title and the results are better aligned.

2. Are the data sound and well controlled?

3. Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?

The discussion is well balanced in respect of the previous literature. However, the data struggles to support any conclusions due to the very small numbers involved. While this is acknowledged the justification for the small numbers is not convincing. Furthermore, there is no discussion of the potential impact of such small focus groups on the results or the implications of only female carers. There is no mention of whether BME carers were involved or the need for further research if they were not.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?

The methods are well described and the analysis and reporting are clear.

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods?

In view of the numbers of participants recruited interviews may have been a
better method.

3. Can the writing, organization, tables and figures be improved?
The standard of writing is acceptable. A table that describes the characteristics of the participants would be helpful.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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