Author's response to reviews

Title: Dying, death and bereavement: a qualitative study of the views of carers of people with heart failure in the UK.

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

thank you for sending the very detailed reviewers comments on our article. We have revised our manuscript in response to these comments and now resubmit it. This covering letter is to let you know the specific way we have engaged with the referees comments in our re-write.

Our usual practice in revising is to detail each point from reviewers and specify our response and the changes we have made accordingly. In this case we identified 63 specific areas of suggested changes, and some areas had many detailed sub-points. As is always the case a number of points were contradictory, for example asking both for more detail and further references alongside wanting us to make the article shorter.

Because of the number of detailed comments we have done two things, first group comments into general categories and respond to these and second take a number of the key points from the referees and respond to each of them.

General points.

Design faults. Referees felt the design of the article needed changing – specifically results were presented too early. We have cut the section that was identified as wrongly placed from the background, have restructured this section and have considerably shortened it, consistent with referees suggestions. The more general points in response to comments about the papers design have prompted us to a major re-write of the paper and the version submitted is not only considerably shorter but also much more focused on the views of the carers we interviewed. In effect the paper is both more modest, with aims very much reflecting the detail of the data we present, and more thorough.

Faults in omission. Referees felt that the article did not engage sufficiently with
existing literature. We are grateful for their detailed suggestions on this point. Given the new focus of the article some of the suggestions were no longer central to our intentions but others proved most valuable. It should be noted that what has become a key reference in the new version (Harding et al JPSM 2008) was not known to us when we submitted our paper online in September 2008. We have also added reference to the policy literature, NICE, NSF and the like that were missing in the earlier version.

Faults in organization Referees felt the argument was not clearly presented – its aims were not clear, the design needed to be further elaborated, the limitations were not fully recognised. All these areas have informed the re-write and we feel are addressed in the new version.

Faults in presentation. We were embarrassed and apologise for submitting the article with mistakes I spelling and with some less than clear sentence structures. We hope we have remedied these.

Thank you for sending us the thoughtful, informative and helpful comments of reviewers. As you and they will see they have prompted the resubmission of a rather different article,