Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 20 April 2009

Reviewer: Amanda J Young

Reviewer's report:

Overall, I felt that the author's have made a good attempt to revise the paper. The methods section is more focused and reads well. The results section is now very clearly laid out, illustrating key aspects of the carer's experience of end of life care for patients with heart failure.

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- Major Compulsory Revisions

INTRODUCTION:
1. Although this version reads better and the authors have reduced the size of the introduction, there now seems to be a lack of literature about carer's experience of end of life care.
2. There is still limited information about futility, which is discussed at great length in the discussion. Perhaps moving some of this into the introduction so that the reader has some idea about the purpose of the paper.

DISCUSSION:
1. I would propose moving the Agard study to the futile section of the discussion. Does this study warrant ¾ page though?
2. Although the discussion is now more clearly focused, I found some parts difficult to follow, particularly page 23 onwards. Possibly use sub sections to help the reader follow your main arguments/conclusions?

- Minor Essential Revisions

(Two points related to the aims of the study)

ABSTRACT:
1. The background section still needs to be more concise, “the study aims to/the aim of this study is to…”or what is lacking in the current literature?

INTRODUCTION:
1. The aim of the paper is still not clearly stated (what is the purpose? what is it assessing?)

- Discretionary Revisions

ABSTRACT:
The discussion section needs more clarity, what do the findings suggest? Possibly, “Our findings suggest that whilst carers use a range of strategies to cope with bereavement there is a need for continued support for vulnerable carers.”

The authors very briefly mention depression at the beginning of the results section and again in the conclusion. However, there is no literature in the paper about depression and bereavement, is this a discussion point?

- Needs some language corrections before being published:
  1. Page 6 – sentence consideration “(SB) and invited to participate in an interview” rather than invited to complete an interview.
  2. page 6 – “The coding that resulted was” does not sound right possibly, “the final coding from each researcher was compared”
  3. Page 8 – sentence consideration “a small number of the people had discussed with their family carer that they would prefer to die rather than survive a crisis and be helpless or immobile.”
  4. Page 11 – replace with “The death as an event…”
  5. Page 22 – possibly delete the sentence “But both the increasing number of studies in this area, that we have reported above, and findings in this study…” and replace with “Our findings”
  6. Page 22 – possibly delete the sentence “But even if discussion well in advance did happen it would not be enough.”
  7. Page 22 – reconsider the last sentence on this page possibly consider “due to the progressive nature of heart failure advanced care planning needs to be regularly reviewed…”
  8. Page 27 – reference 1 date (May 2995) error
  9. Page 28 – reference 6 no date

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.