Reviewer's report

Title: Practical knowledge of experienced nurses in critical care. A qualitative study of nurses' narratives

Version: 1 Date: 1 April 2014

Reviewer: Justine Aka

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1. Discretionary Revisions
Methodology:
• The inclusion of nurses was based on two criteria: the experience of nurses in numbers of years, and recognition of good practice by their colleagues. How was the latter identified/defined?
• Your data was interpreted by “three researchers with experience in qualitative research”. Please be more specific.
• You also mentioned an audit by other researchers. What does this mean? How many interviews did the nurses attend to?
• You have stated your opening question of the interview which is very broad and open. More specifics on what happened thereafter would be useful for replication of your research. Were there any particular key words or questions you used to guide the interviewee?

How was the interview recorded?

2. Minor Essential Revisions
• The background could be a little more specific on what is meant with practical knowledge in the nursing profession. Inclusion of more literature would possibly help clarification, as well. For example, have other studies elaborated on the practical knowledge in other fields? This could be either in other fields of the nursing profession, or allied health professions?

Emotional and intuitive knowledge was mentioned for the first time in the discussion part of the paper. Mentioning this in the introduction as well, might give a better insight into the subject you researched in to.
• A clear differentiation of knowledge areas would be useful and the explanation of the particular knowledge area you are looking at in your paper (the learning of intuition combined with theoretical knowledge and skills). Reading about what nurses learn in their education in comparison with what they learn through practice would be helpful to read.
• Reference to the table is missing in the results part.
In the results part you state that “overall the nurses with the most years of experience in the critical patient care in the ICU have developed a [...] knowledge that is shown in their detailed description that they give of their everyday practice.” More specific please. What does “most years of experience” mean? How many years?

Abstract and main paper are not coherent. For example, results in the abstract include a part on components of caretaking that guarantee success. These results have not been mentioned in the results part of the main paper. Also, the concluding points differ.

3. Major Compulsory Revisions

Language needs to be reviewed! Some parts of this work are written very complicated with too many words; sentences could be shortened and parts expressed more clearly and specific in other words. Some examples:

“Nevertheless the practice of caretaking and the knowledge and experience used while doing so, as is topical, is characterised by being invisible and difficult to quantify. The question that arises from this problem: how can we study this?”

Latter part for example change to: …therefore the question arises how the practical knowledge of nurses working in critical care can be assessed. Also, the knowledge and experience in caretaking being invisible is not very well expressed and not specific. What is meant with it being invisible?

“The practical everyday knowledge marks a difference that in critical patients can represent life or death.” If I understood it right I believe what you are meaning to say here is that learning to apply practical knowledge can have a major influence on the well-being of patients? (Additionally I cannot read in your paper that there is evidence for practical knowledge to have an influence on mortality of patients.)

“Eleven nurses participated in the study, all are women, the man/women ratio in the ICUs the participants are from is approximately 1/20.” Sentence needs to be rewritten.

These are only examples. Overall language lacks flow and use of professional terminology.

The main research question or hypotheses are not stated.

Many of the single statements from the interview have been generalised in the results and discussion of this paper. This is not correct, it has to be clarified how many nurses have found a certain aspect to be important, adding the years of experience this nurse has. Include the numbers. Sample size is too small to generalize your findings for a whole population of nurses.

Limitations are missing.

Regarding the conclusion: Experienced nurses providing “healing power” was mentioned for the first time in the conclusion of the paper. Evidence for this cannot be found in your work. Concluding sentence is not specific or clear. It does not represent your results.

Overall, the scientific strength and the structure of this paper have to be
reviewed. Too many assumptions are made without having strong evidence for these.
Instead of using a BBC resource, try to find the scientific paper the journalist was referring to! (Reference 53).

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

**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.