Reviewer's report

Title: Knowing and Being Known: A Qualitative Ethical Analysis of Social Values in Rural Palliative Care

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Reviewer: Julia Downing

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting and informative paper looking at ethical values for rural palliative care. The issues raised are important ones and whilst they are concepts that are known within the field, they have not been addressed in such a manner previously.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Within the background section of the paper the authors discussion issues around ethnography and ethics in rural palliative care and discuss that they are reporting on a descriptive account of the values enacted in rural areas representing good palliative care. However, the paper would benefit from a clearer statement of the question being posed.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods used i.e. interviews, field work and participant observation are appropriate for this form of qualitative ethnographic approach, although the paper goes on to report mainly on the interviews and it is not clear how the remaining data was used.

3. Are the data sound?
There is not a lot of information given with regards to the data – the professional demographics are given of those interviewed although issues such as age, gender, length of time they have lived in the area etc are not stated. Examples of qualitative data from the interviews are given throughout the paper.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion is clear and informative and relates the findings to the existing literature and complement it. The inclusion of the case study helps to demonstrate how the values are important within the field of rural palliative care provision.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Some limitations are included on page 18 within the discussion section and it
would be helpful to separate these out into a separate section.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Appropriate references have been utilized

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The title clearly sets out what is being discussed within the paper. The abstract sets out the key points of the paper and prepares the reader well.

9. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes it is – there are a few minor typing errors but otherwise it is fine.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

• Strengthen the statement of the aims of the study and the questions being posed
• Separate out the limitations of the study from the discussion into a separate section
• Include more demographic data re the respondents interviewed eg. Age, gender, length of time lived in the area

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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