Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 19 April 2011

Reviewer: Donna M Wilson

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions. An interesting study and generally good report, but a major revision is required.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? no, it is not clear if this is a study to determine the social values of rural people in BC in relation to death and dying or in relation to what they believe is "good" palliative care or a "good death" (a commonly used term now) - or if this is an ethics study (but it is not an ethics study). There is a repeated mention of ethics and yet no link made for the reader between social values and ethics. The readers are not reminded of the main ethical principles and other ethical frameworks; so it would be helpful if the authors focused on social values and dropped the repeated mention of ethics.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? yes, generally - with the exception of the recurrent mention of ethics throughout the paper, as this was not an ethical analysis of data but instead a standard qualitative data analysis.

3. Are the data sound? yes, except for the case study.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes, I guess so.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? There are 3 main issues - the case study around closing a small rural hospital (it is not evident how this case study fits in the paper as an illustration of rural social values, it simply points out that doctors like to have a local hospital and that people do not like change even when needed for economic or patient safety reasons to have health care consolidated in larger hospitals. In addition, local people would have been involved in the decision to consolidate health care in larger hospitals - this was not done TO the local people without their knowledge and they likely would have been able to attend planning meetings before the local hospital closed as the regional health authority would have had those meetings), the blurring of rural social values with ethics, and some gaps in discussion of other key Canadian rural palliative care literature, specifically around Canadian social values, good deaths, and EOL care:


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6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? yes generally, with the exception of the issues noted above
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? no comment by reviewer.
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? NO - this is not a qualitative ethical analysis, but instead a qualitative ethnography on social values in rural palliative care. In addition, it is not ok to identify the first theme only (Knowing and being known) in the title.
9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, except for content issues identified above.
This should not be a very difficult revision for the authors, and hopefully these revisions will be done, as it would be nice to see additional research reports on rural palliative care in Canada.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
no
I declare that I have no competing interests