Author's response to reviews

Title: Nurse managers' experience with ethical issues in six government hospitals in Malaysia: A cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Maizura binti Musa, October 13, 2011

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RESUBMISSION OF MANUSCRIPT FOLLOWING PEER REVIEW

Dear editorial board of BMC Medical Ethics,

I am writing on behalf of the other authors to resubmit our research paper for publication in BMC Medical Ethics Journal, following some comments received from the editor and two peer reviewers.

We have made some corrections to the manuscript following the comments and suggestions by the peer reviewers. The answers to the comments are as attached in the
appendix. The revised manuscript is also attached, with changes highlighted using red fonts.

We sincerely apologize for the delay in submitting the revised manuscript as we have just finally obtained the approval from the Director General of Health of Malaysia to publish the paper (through a letter dated October 7, 2011). We highly hope that the Editorial Board and the reviewers will be satisfied with the explanation and the amendments made, and would make further consideration for this paper to be published.

Thank you so much for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,

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Appendix

Below are the answers to the comments made by reviewers (Of note, this paper has also been reviewed by the National Health Institute (NIH) of Malaysia, under the Ministry of Health of Malaysia that suggested some amendments be made from the previous version of the manuscript, prior to approval by the Director General of Health of Malaysia):

General response to both reviewers’ comments

We agreed that this study has some limitations in that the results are only analyzed in quantitative terms. However, the study was not initially designed as a qualitative study. We also had no objective method of knowing earlier on whether the participants had adequate knowledge of ethics in order to identify whether or not the problems they encountered were truly ethical issues. Hence, we decided to use sets of questions that provided multiple-choice answers to guide the participants and minimize inconsistencies in responses. However, even though space was actually provided to allow them indicate other ‘areas of management’ where ethical issues were experienced; it was not filled up by any participant.

Specific response to reviewer 2 (Nina Horwitz)

Thank you for highlighting that the pages were not numbered in the previous version. We have included the page numbers in the revised version.
Specific revisions made in the manuscript

Title:
The NIH had commented on the title. The use of the word ‘Malaysia’ alone implies that the study findings are generalized to all nurse managers in Malaysia. The fact that it was done only in government hospitals, the results they believe, may be unique only to the group of nurse managers in those hospitals. Based on their comment, we have amended the title to “Nurse managers’ experience with ethical issues in six government hospitals in Malaysia: A cross sectional study”, which was approved by the NIH.

Abstract:
We have changed the word “determine” in the purpose of the study with the word “explore” as was suggested by the NIH as this study is more relevantly an explorative study. We thank the second reviewer (Nina Horwitz) who also highlighted this point.

We have also added the words “in six government hospitals in Malaysia” after the words “ethical issues” to suit with the title.

Background:
Similarly, we have changed the word “determine” in the purpose of the study with the word “explore” as indicated in the abstract.

Methods:
First paragraph

Suggestion by the NIH was to include the reason why we chose the six hospitals. The hospitals were major hospitals in the state of Selangor, Putrajaya and the capital city Kuala Lumpur, which were of convenient access to the researcher. Hence, we have included this fact in the first paragraph of this section.

Instrument - Part II of the questionnaire

Recall period was based on the recall of participants of their experience with ethical issues while practicing as nurse managers. The words “since they became nurse managers” were added as suggested by the NIH.

Results:

(No amendment was made in this section)

Discussion:

Limitation

We understood the reviewers’ concern about not having qualitative results in the study, which we admit as one of the important limitation of the study. We have elaborated this in the discussion section as stated below:

“In addition, not using open-ended questions or exhaustive list in this study lead to limited options that precluded new input and provision of exact descriptions from the
participants on the types of ethical issues they experienced. As a result, we could not identify whether or not there were any ethical issues that may be unique to nurse managers in these hospitals especially those that may be related to their cultural and social background.”

In response to a comment by the NIH about the recall period in the method section, we have also included this as the third limitation in the last paragraph of the discussion section.

**Conclusion:**

We have edited the conclusion section due to a comment by the NIH that the use of the words “in all practice areas” at the end of the first sentence was a bit of exaggeration. Therefore, the first line was amended as “The frequent experience with ethical issues suggests that awareness is still needed for nurses who already reached nurse manager positions.”

We have included a statement in the last paragraph to recommend better and more qualitative studies to be conducted in the future.

Thank you.

Maizura binti Musa

(October 13, 2011)