Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 14 July 2011

Reviewer: Nina Horwitz

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions
This manuscript adequately meets the formal requirements and basic criteria for the report of a research study that has been successfully completed, except for the fact that its pages are not numbered.

Discretionary Revisions
However, there are certain basic issues regarding the methodological framework selected to study the problem in that particular context that are interesting to address.

The authors indicate that there is no previous study about this matter in Malaysia. Thus, this is a research of an exploratory nature, whose purpose, as stated by the authors, “was to determine Malaysian nurse managers’ experience with ethical issues and to learn how they dealt with these issues”. My basic query, then, concerns the justification of a self administered questionnaire to gather the data with predetermined categories of response, to investigate the two key concepts: experience with ethical issues and the ways in which they are resolved. The question is if the use of open questions in this case, would have been wiser, to capture, in the subjects’ own words, their experience and personal or cultural definitions on the matters, and then proceed inductively, to elaborate general categories of response. Very often qualitative research is understood as complementary to quantitative data but not as the basis for quantitative research. In dominions concerning behavior, experience and personal or local identification and definition of concepts, an unstructured qualitative interview can play a very rich role in reporting valid data.

My overall opinion after reading this manuscript is that, even though the requirements of a quantitative study are adequately met, the results accomplished are highly predictable, probably due to the influence of the social desirability factor affecting the responses to the questionnaire. This fact, in my view, reduces the potential richness and innovative quality of the data.

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:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'