Reviewer's report

Title: Building an Ethical Environment Improves Patient Privacy and Satisfaction in the Crowded Emergency Department: a quasi-experimental study

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Reviewer: Roberta Siliquini

Reviewer's report:

The paper faces an important topic in the management of patient. It is the duty of physicians to keep patient information confidential and also to identify all possible strategies to ensure the privacy of patients.

The comparison of the level of satisfaction before-after structural or organizational changes is a strategy that is currently not very treated in the literature, because of the difficulty to obtain comparable samples, although there are some experiences in the literature, some recent, which can contextualize and justify the choice of authors.

The aim of this work is to examine the effect of an intervention targeting ED patient privacy and confidentiality as well as satisfaction. The objective of the study is clearly defined. The same authors have previously published an article analyzing the sample "before", cited in bibliography [Lin YK, Lin CJ. Factors predicting patients' perception of privacy and satisfaction for emergency care. Emerg Med J. 2011 Jul;28(7):604-8] but the two articles differ in purpose and design of the study, so we can say that the results presented in this paper are original.

The title accurately reflects the study design and the text content. The abstract is complete and provides the essence of the study clearly and concisely, the statistical analysis is appropriate to the study design.

The article is written in compliance with the editorial indication of BMC Medical Ethics journal.

Although the paper may be valuable and worthy of publication, some major and minor revisions should be considered

Major revisions:

- The study design is appropriate to achieve the objective and clearly described but I suggest the authors to justify and contextualize the choice of this type of study in reference to the published literature.

- The sample size appears adequate with the study design but I suggest the authors to specify whether samples taken in different months of the year can be comparable (respect to: numbers of ED census in the period chosen, kind of diseases and problems).
I recommend authors to specify if they enrolled all patients who entered the emergency room, or if patients were selected and the city in which they have carried out the study.

- Regarding “data collection and processing” I suggest authors to add some information about the questionnaire, such as whether it was self-administered or administered by the operators and the reasons for this choice.

- The Authors found an important and significant difference in the treatment area between pre and post-intervention groups. I believe that this element affects the comparability of samples. Furthermore, I believe that the privacy and patient satisfaction can be influenced by the patient's medical condition and that this should be listed as limitation of the study or as an element that must be evaluated in future studies.

- The results confirm significant improvements in patient perception of “personal information overheard by others”, being “seen by irrelevant persons”, “unintentionally heard inappropriate conversations from healthcare providers”, and “providers’ respect for my privacy”. There was significant improvement in patient overall perception of privacy and satisfaction. There were statistically significant correlations between the intervention and patient overall perception of privacy and satisfaction on multivariate analysis. I recommend the authors to discuss this result compared to other recent publications.

- References are correct and consistent with the topics covered, but are dated. Therefore, I suggest to cite some more recent papers published on this topic, such as Lovato E. et al Humanisation in the emergency department of an Italian hospital: new features and patient satisfaction Emerg Med J. 2012 Jul 3. For the similarity of the topics covered and the study design, we believe that this recent Italian publication may be useful in the discussion of the results and to enrich the bibliography.

Minor revisions:

- About "intervention", I believe that the authors have fully explained the actions undertaken, however I think it is appropriate to justify these choices with some recent references.
- Regarding the bibliography entry number 5, it is now possible to add the volume number and page [29 (6) :437-43].

**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' below.