Reviewer's report

Title: Ethical challenges in connection with the use of coercion. A focus group study of health care personnel in mental health care

Version: 2
Date: 25 September 2014

Reviewer: Stella Reiter-Theil

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   a) Taking a qualitative approach – focus group study – is fine in this explorative context. The process of exchanging views between the co-authors is described in detail.
   b) However, no indication is given on how and how far or how well agreement was reached (inter-rater reliability). Instead, the authors say that they “basically agreed” e.g. on the interpretation of the findings (see page 7, line 5). Even in qualitative research, getting a bit more than that information would be desirable.

3. Are the data sound?
   Yes.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   In reporting the data – and quotes – the text is mixing tenses. This should be harmonised.
   An overview of the categories found, or a table, would help the reader to get a better overview when reading the long and narrative report which is interrupted by numerous quotes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes.
   Unfortunately, the paper does not give much clarification of what is understood by “ethical challenges” in patient care – by the authors themselves: some theoretical reconstruction of the findings (quotes).
   As a reader one may want to know more precisely according to which theoretical / ethical framework or concept of “ethical challenge” the authors interpret their
findings.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? No.
The authors mention strengths of their study and 1 limitation, evaluating the limitation at the same time as strength (see page 20, line 5).
Weaknesses that could be mentioned: see above, points 2 b) and 5.
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Clinical ethics support literature offers rich descriptions on the understanding of “ethical challenges”, e.g. as triggers for demands of ethics consultation. (It is appropriate to include references even if they come from other clinical settings – not psychiatry and not focusing on coercion.)
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The sub-title is very appropriate.
The major title focuses on “ethical challenges” which are – as said above – not quite as much clarified as would be desirable.
9. Is the writing acceptable?
The language of the paper is generally good.

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’