Reviewer’s report

Title: Ethical challenges in surgery as narrated by practicing surgeons

Version: 1 Date: 19 January 2005

Reviewer: Donna M. Romyn

Reviewer’s report:

- There seems to be a discrepancy in the description of the types of manuscripts to be generated as a result of this research study in the description on page 6 (second to last paragraph before heading “Methods™”) and the description on page 9 (second to last paragraph before heading “Insert Table 1 about here).

- Minor Essential Revisions
  - There are a number of grammatical errors where noun and verb forms are not consistent; detract from overall quality of paper. Minor editing required.

- Discretionary Revisions
  - Additional detail with respect to data analysis may be useful to readers who are not familiar with techniques. For example, was the analysis conducted by the team as a whole? If so, how were differences in interpretation dealt with?
  - There is a sentence on page 18 (last sentence second paragraph beginning “Human life means”) that is identical to a sentences on page 21. Was this the authors’ intent? Does one or the other perhaps need to be paraphrased?

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   - Aim of study clearly and concisely stated.
   - Literature review suggests that this is a unique question and that there has been little similar past research.
   - Manuscripts reports on one aspect of data analysis (i.e., relation ethical perspective); clear indication that second aspect (i.e., action ethical perspective) to be reported separately.
   - Please see earlier comments under “Major Compulsory Revision™ related to differences contained in paper related to types of papers to be published.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are there sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   - Methods succinctly described. Three phases of data analysis defined and described briefly however no indication as to whether or not all three authors involved in analysis and/or how differences in interpretation were resolved.
   - No indication as to whether or not efforts were made to validate interpretations with participants.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   - Interviews tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.
   - Leading question noted as well as types of probes used noted.
   - Confidentiality of participants maintained.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data disposition?
   - Format of manuscript, including data analysis and interpretation consistent with methodology (i.e., phenomenological hermeneutics).
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   A: Themes and subthemes listed in tabular form; narrative follow similar sequence/outline.
   A: Physicians’ descriptions consistent with themes/subthemes.
   A: For the most part, descriptions are what one would expect to find in the literature in relation to
each of the themes/subthemes. The one aspect of/set of findings in this study that appears to be
unique is the descriptions of how physicians seek confirmation/affirmation and support from each
other. It will be interesting to see if similar kinds of relation ethical perspectives are found among
nurses.
   A: Discussion of findings integrates findings from a wide range of works which appear to
validate/support interpretations/findings yet builds upon/furthers that which is already known thus
making a positive contribution to the literature in this area.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   A: While the abstract notes that narratives collective from both physicians and nurses, there is not
indication in manuscript as to where analysis of nurses’ interpretations published or if such a
publication is forthcoming. Nor is there any indication as to whether or not there is any intent on the
part of the authors to compare findings.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   A: Yes, clear, concise. Content presented in coherent fashion.
   A: Minor grammatical errors noted in consistency with noun and verb forms. Some attention needs tc
be paid to placement and/or addition of apostrophe in singular and possessive nouns (e.g.,
physician’s versus physicians’).

A well written manuscript overall which has the potential to make a significant contribution to the
literature in this area.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.