Author's response to reviews

Title: In-hospital informal caregivers' needs as perceived by themselves and by the nursing staff in Northern Greece: a descriptive study

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Version: 3 Date: 19 June 2011

Author's response to reviews: see over
June 19th, 2011

To: Editor
BMC Nursing

Dear Editor,

We are pleased to submit our revised manuscript entitled “Safety In-hospital informal caregivers’ needs as perceived by themselves and by the nursing staff in Northern Greece: a descriptive study” for your consideration.

Thank you very much for your valuable comments. We have made every effort to revise our manuscript based on the reviewers’ and your comments and recommendations. Below we provide a detailed response based on the reviewers’ comments.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at (00357) 99025708 or via e-mail. I would like to thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr Vasilios Raftopoulos
Assistant Professor
Cyprus University of Technology
Response to Reviewers’ Comments

Reviewer 1

Pornchai jullamate

Thank you for your good words

Reviewer 2

Silvio SB Brusaferro

1. methods it is not clear the period when the study was conducted;; it is not clear which wards were involved; it is not clear if the questions were posed with regards to specific patients or in general.
2. statistical analysis assumes (but it is not demonstrated) that the variables distribution is normal: if this is true the tests are correct but if this is not the case it should be advisable to use non parametric tests.

We appreciate your comments on the article. They were very helpful. In the methods section it was added the period that the study was conducted as well as the relevant wards. Also, the questions were not posed to specific patients. The variables were checked for normal distribution. According to the central limit even if a population distribution is strongly non-normal, its sampling distribution of means will be approximately normal for large sample sizes (over 30). The Central Limit Theorem makes it possible to use probabilities associated with the normal curve to answer questions about the means of sufficiently large samples.

Reviewer 3

Aggie Paulus

1. Background:
For the reader who is not familiar with the needs of informal care givers and the importance of informal care in Greece, the background description could benefit from:
a) A clearer definition of educational and informational needs for this specific study;
b) A description of the importance of in-hospital informal care in Greece. Why is this type of care such an important issue in Greece?
c) A clearer description of the scientific relevancy of the study
d) An explicit formulation of the main goal and research questions of the study

Background:
a) A clearer definition and explanation of educational and informational needs as well as a description of the importance of in-hospital informal care in Greece have been added (page 3).
b) In page 4 we have described the importance of this type of care in Greece based on the relevant literature. c) the scientific relevancy of the study has been documented d) at the end of the background the main purpose of the study and the research questions have been added.

2. Methods:
This paper raises several methodological issues. They are listed below:

a) Design and sample. As the paper is unclear about the patient groups, units and hospitals involved, the paper should elaborate on the following issues:

i. What type of patients is this paper about? Chronic care patients? Patients with particular diseases?

ii. What type of wards or units is the paper about? Are they special units or wards?

iii. What types of hospitals are involved? Are these hospitals comparable?

iv. The paper addresses several inclusion criteria for caregivers. Where there also additional exclusion criteria?

Thank you for your comments. The study has been conducted in medical wards and the sample consisted of patients with pathological problems. The hospitals involved are three General hospitals in a major city in Greece. They are not special units. The hospitals are comparable. The following exclusion criteria have been added in the text: informal caregivers who did not understand or were not able to read or write in Greek language.

b) Instrument:

i. The authors have used a self-developed questionnaire. Why? Were there alternative questionnaires? If so, why have these not been used?

ii. The authors state that three experts had a look at this questionnaire. What were the comments of these three experts on the list? Was there a pilot-study to test the list? Has the list been adapted on the basis of the comments of the experts? If so, how and why?

iii. It seems as though the questionnaire (for the category educational needs) includes many questions for family care outside the hospital. Since the paper is on in-hospital care, why were these questions addressed?

Instrument

i. We have decided to use a self-developed questionnaire because it has also been used and in other studies that have been conducted in Greece and has been proved valid, reliable and adequate for use in the Greek population. The questionnaire about educational and informational needs is a part of a specially designed questionnaire. This has been designed to investigate informal care provided to hospitalized patients. The questionnaire has been developed by Sapountzi-Krepia et al (2006) and is labelled as “In –Hospital Informal Care Questionnaire Acute Care (IHICQAC)”. It is a new version of the In–Hospital Informal Care Questionnaire (IHICQ), which was previously adapted for the acute care patients. The same questionnaire has been used in two other published studies. The relevant citation is


ii. In this paragraph we describe in details how the questionnaire has been developed. Also, it was conducted a pilot study for this research.

iii. The questionnaire includes many items for family care outside the hospital, because in hospital informal caregivers (mainly members of their family) participate in the care of their hospitalized relatives providing assistance with personal hygiene, feeding, making beds bathing and helping taking oral medication.

3. Results:
   a) The main goal of the paper is to compare the needs of informal caregivers as perceived by these caregivers themselves and by formal caregivers. The results section, however, is somewhat distracting. It seems as though the focus is more on a comparison within the group of formal caregivers (e.g. between nurses with a longer and shorter working experience) than between the two groups (informal caregivers versus formal caregivers). Tables 2 and 3 add to this distraction. Since the main idea is to compare the results of both groups, it would be recommendable to construct a table that compares the health education needs for both groups (table 2) and a table that compares the informational needs for both groups (table 3). Additionally, a table could be constructed that reveals the influencing factors. The results section could then be arranged accordingly: differences in perceptions on educational needs; differences in the perceptions on informational needs; influencing factors.
   b) Since 3 hospitals have been investigated, is there any noticeable difference between the perceptions of both groups in the three hospitals?
   c) If more than one patient group has been part of the research (this is unclear in the paper), are there differences between perceptions of both groups of caregivers for particular types of patients?

Results

a) Table 2 and 3 have been deleted and were replaced from new tables that compare the health education and informational needs for both groups. Also, it was added a new table (table 4) that revealed the influencing factors.

b) The difference between the perceptions of both groups in the three hospitals was not included in the aims of the present study.
c) We have not examined the differences between perceptions of both groups of caregivers for particular types of patients because it was not included in the aims of the present study

4. Discussion
The paper mentions only two study limitations. It is strongly recommended to address more issues and especially:
- the construction and validity of the questionnaire;
- the possible presence of response bias;
- the sample selection

Discussion
In the text it was added the limitation of the construction and validity of the questionnaire, the response biases and the limitation about sample collection

5. Conclusions and implications:
a) In the conclusion a direct link is made between perceptions and nursing care quality. The relation with health care quality is not well-argumented and should be adjusted.
b) What is the major conclusion of this study?
c) It is strongly recommended to include clear scientific and practical recommendations in this paper.

Minor Essential Revisions
6) The paper could benefit from language corrections (both grammar and spelling).
7) Number 7 is missing in the questionnaire for caregivers. Please change.

Discretionary Revisions
8) From the abstract it is not clear that this paper is about 3 hospitals in 1 city in Greece. Please add this information to the abstract.

Conclusions and implications

This paragraph has been changed, it was added a major conclusion and practical recommendations.

Number 7 is missing in the questionnaire for caregivers. Please change.

There is no missing item. We have added in the second questionnaire an item more in the demographic characteristics.

Also, in the abstract it was added that this research is conducted in three hospitals in one major city in Greece.

In abstract it has changed the background, sample and methods, the results and the conclusions.

1. At the end of the background were added the main purpose of the study as well as the specific aims of the study.
2. The inclusion criteria of nurses and in hospital informal caregivers are the same. In the text it was added the exclusion criteria for in hospital informal caregivers.
In the text it was added the procedure about the construction of the questionnaire as well as the content validity. The reliability of the instrument removed and reported in Methods section.

3. We added the specific objectives of the study so the results reorganized. In conclusion the sentence “….this implies a poor nursing care quality. Therefore, nurses in Greece have to exceed the problem of nursing shortage and to act as health educators and counselors.” has removed. The conclusions have been changed according the recommendations of the reviewers.

Also, the sentence “A second limitation is that the sample of the study is convenient and the data collection was performed within a small period of time. So, the findings probably don’t reflect the perceptions of nurses and informal caregivers generally” has removed. The limitations have been changed and were added some other limitations.

In addition, we would like to mention that the paper revised and edited by a bilingual person. Also, some mistakes on the reference part have been corrected.