Reviewer’s report

Title: Perceived stress and gastrointestinal symptoms in nursing students in Korea: A cross-sectional survey

Version: 2 Date: 2 August 2011

Reviewer: petra lindfors

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

As in my previous review of the manuscript I have concerns relating to the study design and the conclusions. Again, these concerns mainly relate to the way the study aim is formulated and the timing of the data collection. In their response, the Authors clarify that the data collection took place immediately after the final exams and that collecting data at this point in time was convenient for the students. However, it can be discussed whether collecting data during (or immediately after) an exam period adequately reflects the actual prevalence of perceived stress and GI in students. To clarify, if the exam period is considered more stressful than other periods of the academic year then the exam period is no longer representative for the remaining study year. From this follows that stress-levels and perhaps GI problems are higher during the exam period than during the remaining academic year. Of course this is unless there are other exam periods apart from these final exams, are there other such exam periods?

If these final exams are considered as and (scientifically) reported as more strenuous than other parts of the education, then this means that the figures reported in the paper actually refer to an extreme situation (e.g. this type of stress is not experienced throughout the school-year but only during this specific period). Is this so?

In view of the study design and timing of the data collection, the aim and title of the paper should be more specific and refer to the fact that the study focuses on a specific period of time, e.g. during (final) exams. However, narrowing down the focus to reflect what was actually measured has, perhaps, implications for the generalizability of findings: How many publications report on health problems during (or immediately following) an exam period? To solve this and to increase clarity, these issues should be clarified and addressed in the manuscript.

If the stress levels and GI problems are related to the exam period then suggesting tailored intervention programs is perhaps not the solution? Perhaps it would be more adequate to suggest additional efforts focusing on how nursing students can cope with preparing for and sitting through exams?

Minor Essential Revisions

1) There are still a number of spelling and grammatical errors that have to be
corrected. For instance, "data was" should be replaced by "data were" and "Engle" should be "Engel".

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**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