Reviewer's report

Title: Hostile clinician behaviours in the nursing work environment and implications for patient care: A mixed-methods systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 2 July 2013

Reviewer: Carol Wong

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Manuscript Title: Hostile clinician behaviours in the nursing work environment and implications for patient care: A mixed-methods systematic review

Manuscript Review: Overall Significance

This review addresses an important and timely topic, how hostile clinician behaviours (HCBs) affect patient care. The article is well written overall and findings are worthy of publication. However, there are some issues that should be addressed as outlined in the following number recommendations. Comments that are discretionary are marked with a (D).

Introduction:
The introduction was effective in providing background and significance for this review. (1) Authors identified that they chose to use the term “hostile clinician behaviours” instead of other terms such as “disruptive behaviour” for example but there needs to be a clear definition of this term provided in the intro – what is the range of behaviours included in this definition?

Methods:

Overall, methods for this review were well described. (2) Rationale for including qualitative and mixed methods studies with quantitative was provided but could have been stronger. Clarity and synthesis of findings from the quantitative findings get somewhat lost in the attempt to find themes across all studies. Perhaps some of the following recommendations will address this.

Inclusion Criteria and Search Outcomes

(3) The second last sentence of inclusion criteria mentions that 2 studies were excluded due to pooled data – were these studies mentioned in the 65 excluded in the previous text or an additional 2 studies making it 67? Need to clarify and amend numbers in Figure 1 if required.

(4) The description of search outcomes could benefit from more detail as to type of settings and countries included in the reviewed studies.

Quality Review of Studies and Analysis

(5) It would be helpful to include a bit more information about criteria in the JBI-MAStari appraisal instrument for reviewing descriptive and case study designs. Are the criteria the same for both types of studies? (D)
(6) A statement is made in the first sentence under “Quality Review” that is not entirely accurate in my view. Authors stated that “meta-analysis of quantitative data” was not possible because there were no randomized controlled trials located. It is possible to conduct meta-analysis of quantitative data from correlational or predictive studies that are not intervention studies. It may be that the variety of HCB behaviours and outcome measures and/or heterogeneity of samples and settings more than likely preclude meta-analysis procedures thus limiting the consolidation of findings.

(7) Although Table 1 is helpful there should also be a text reference or table that indicates how many studies were rated in each of the low, moderate or high by type of study evaluated, i.e., quantitative or qualitative. A key point in the discussion is made about the ‘lack of robust evidence” but the reader has no idea how many studies were included in each category.

(8) As for quantitative study design issues, authors state that sampling and design were the most common limitations but the reader is not informed what these issues were. There should be more detail on this.

Results and Discussion:

(9) Throughout the explanation of the four themes found in the review of studies, there are a few places where the direction of the relationship between HSBs and care outcomes is not provided. For example, in the McCusker et al. study “nurse-physician relations was associated with overall quality” but what was the direction of the relationship?

(10) I found it puzzling that there were no comments or discussion of measures used to assess hostile clinician behaviours in quantitative studies given this was a central aspect of the review question and there was a range of behaviours included in the definition of HCBs mentioned in the introduction. What were the common measures used and what observations could be made about these measures?

(11) There should be some recommendations re: content and design of future studies based on this review. This is an important outcome area for a systematic review.

Minor Essential Revisions

(12) On the first page of the manuscript, last paragraph beginning, “It is widely...” the second sentence, “The flow on effect of ....” is unclear as to meaning. Suggest deleting words, “the flow”.

(13) Similar unclear wording, that is, “flow over of hostility.....” is mentioned in the last paragraph, second last sentence of the “Results” section.

There some other very minor typo issues: nurses experiences vs. nurses’ in one place and misspelling of physician in one place.

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.