Reviewer's report

Title: Nurses’ perceptions and experiences of communication in the operating theatre: a focus group interview

Version: 1 Date: 19 August 2005

Reviewer: Patricia Margaret Anne Lyon

Reviewer's report:

General
See comments below under major compulsory revisions. With regard to 'Level of interest' below, the paper could make a significant contribution if findings from the other focus groups and from the observations were included and integrated around the framework of teamwork in the operating theatre.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1) This paper reports on nurses’ perception and experiences of communication in the operating theatre (OT) and the authors state that this was part of a broader project which included interviews with different professional groups, and observations of interactions in the OT. This paper is insufficient in itself to merit publication but if the authors were to combine the results with data from the focus groups with the other professional groups and the observations in the OT then the paper may well constitute a useful contribution to the limited literature in this field. This would enable triangulation of data, (with greater depth and breadth) the lack of which is a major and serious limitation of the current paper. Separation of the data from the one study into several publications will only weaken the contribution the authors can potentially make.

2) The authors state that the focus of the paper is on communication yet much of the data from the focus group deals more broadly with teamwork and interaction in the OT of which communication is but one aspect. The paper would make a much more useful contribution if it were to be reframed in the context of teamwork, drawing on the extensive literature in this field. There is a mismatch between what the authors see as the main focus of the paper and the much broader concerns about teamwork being expressed by the focus group participants.

3) Whilst there are many references given, the authors have not made effective use of the literature in the text. The literature should be used to support an argument or to provide an example of similar or divergent findings, or for the authors to critically review and identify gaps in content, methodology etc. etc. That is, it should be used for a specific purpose. For example, on page 4 the authors refer to papers 3 – 20 but the reader is given very little insight into the content of these 18 references or what or how the authors intend these references to contribute to the paper.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

4) Quotations from participants need to be edited for clarity and ease of reading, inserting punctuation, editor’s words, and any changes to the original text in brackets to help the reader make sense of what the participant is saying, and importantly so that the reader can understand how the authors meant to use the quotation to support the argument. (See, for example, the quotation from
participant 1 on page 13 and many of the others. I had to read it several times and edit it for myself for it to make any sense.)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.