Reviewer's report

**Title:** Practice Nurses' views of their role in the management of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalagic Encephalitis: a qualitative study

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 31 October 2008

**Reviewer:** Jocalyn Lawler

**Reviewer's report:**

Major compulsory revisions.

1. The paper has a number of naive methodological and conceptual assumptions that substantially limit the confidence that readers could have in the findings.

2. **Design and methodology**

   The sample of practice nurses is poorly described, in particular, there is no information about their qualifications or experience (beyond years of practice etc. in Table 1), and whether they are registered nurses or not – and this limits severely what inferences we can draw from this study. Readers would need to know a lot more about how or if these nurses could be differentiated in their responses according to qualifications and experience. These factors would also need to be considered in making any recommendations arising from the study.

3. The authors tell us very little about who conducted the interviews and what qualifications and/or their field of practice and expertise. This is important in asking questions of nurses about their practice and the confidence one can have in their answers. It is also telling that there appeared to be a substantial number who declined to participate. The study is, in my opinion, very limited in what we can draw from it unless we have a lot more information about the experience, qualifications and career characteristics of the nurses in the sample and the interviewer. Was there a nurse in the research team who could provide input into how nursing works in practice and as a research field?

4. The interviews also appear to be very brief, compared with what one normally sees. An interview of 12 minutes would not normally yield much useful data in the interview context. I note also that reference is made to a study in which nurse practitioners were engaged to work with a similar patient group. Some comment on the differences between NPs and practice nurses (e.g. in relation to demographics, qualifications and professional motivation) would be appropriate. The last paragraph in the Methods section does not read clearly.

5. The **Analysis**, in the main is well organised and reads well in so far as it describes what was found. However, it also contains a lot of raw data that is untheorised and which readers may find tedious. On reading these sections of transcript they would suggest a sample of practice nurses who are probably not highly educated and this is implicit in the discussion that follows. The limited information about the characteristics, qualifications and clinical capabilities and of the practice nurses therefore impacts substantially on what can be drawn from
this study.
6. A question that is implicit, perhaps, is what skill set is thought to be desirable in working with this patient population and how is it acquired.
7. Overall, the intent of the papers seems to be positive, but it reveals a relatively naïve stance about qualitative research and nursing in particular.

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

**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.