Reviewer’s report

Title: Perspectives of staff nurses about the reasons for and nature of patient-initiated call-lights: An exploratory survey study in four U.S. hospitals

Version: 2 Date: 18 November 2009

Reviewer: René Schwendimann

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Manuscript entitled „Perspectives of staff nurses about the reasons for and nature of patient-initiated call-lights: An exploratory survey study in four U.S. hospitals” submitted to the Journal BMC Health Services Research

Reviewer’s general comments on the manuscript

The submitted manuscript addresses the important, somewhat understudied topic of patient call-lights / call-bell use and nurse response from the perspectives of nursing staff. After careful review of the well written manuscript a series of mainly minor revisions have to be considered by the author to increase the logic and flow of arguments and for ease of readers understanding.

Major compulsory revisions

1. INTRODUCTION (pg 4)
There is no need to have a separate introduction section since its arguments belong to the background section and should be therefore merged. In addition, sentences regarding call-light and patient falls (lines 4 to 7) hang somewhat unlinked in the text. The last sentence indicating the research gap should be placed at the end of the background section before the study purpose section.

2. BACKGROUND (pg 4-6)
Given the stated purpose and direction of the study; risk factors for falls are quite extensively elaborated and seem not appropriate in this study context. These sentences should be deleted from the manuscript since the author has reported relationships between call-light use and in-patient falls in another study.

Here in the background section it is expected to elaborate on call-light/call-bell use by patients and its relevance in nursing practice to inform the reader on this understudied topic. Additional literature would be useful especially in view of the later discussion of results. Other references are missed such as e.g., Roszell S et al. 2009; Torres SM. 2007; Meade CM et al. 2006; Deitrick L et al. 2006; Duffy S et al. 2005; Miller ET et al. 1997; Van Handel K et al. 1994.

Minor essential revisions

1. Abstract, Background (pg 2)
Start with context of the topic rather than study purpose i.e. give a general statement about the topic of patient call-light use, then add nurses perspectives information and finally state the study purpose.

2. Theoretical framework (pg 6)
Referring to figure 1 (risk factors for falls in in-patient settings) appears not to be appropriate to illustrate the significance of this study given its purpose and research aims. Furthermore, it would be helpful to briefly elaborate on NQF performance measures which lead to figure 2 depicting the study framework.

3. Purpose of the study and research questions (pg 7)
Within this paragraph study purpose and instrumentation is mixed. E.g., the sentence “The nature of call-light use included four yes/no items, (…)” refers to the method section e.g. data sources. The study purpose should be deduced from the research gap in the literature as elaborated in the reworked background section. Keep purpose as clear and short as possible and consistent with the abstract. The last sentence -after the five research questions- belongs to the method section.

4. METHODS, Design (pg 7)
In the design section, only the study design should be indicated, the remaining sentences of this paragraph belongs to the “sample and setting” section. More specifically, the sentences starting with “A total of 808 completed surveys (…)” belongs to the result section.

5. Sample (pg 8)
This section should be entitled as “sample and setting” and should describe its characteristics as mentioned above. Furthermore, it includes data collection procedures which belong to the data sources section.

6. Data sources
This section may be entitled as “Instrumentation and data collection”. Then 1) Give a description of the survey questionnaire used and its development and 2) describe the actual data collection procedure. Regarding the questionnaire development (Reference 3), it would be interesting to know whether content validity indexes were performed based on the experts’ comments (e.g. rating the relevance of its items). Also state the “self reporting” nature of this questionnaire.

7. RESULTS (pg 9-12)
Include the sentences from the methods section as stated above and introduce the reader with some general statements about the characteristics of the study participants. Sentences referring to table 2 should be placed at the end of this introduction paragraph. The last sentences of the paragraph introducing the results section should bridge to the following sub sections to answer the specific research questions.

8. Answers to research questions
This title can be replaced with each of a subtitle indicating the theme of the research question. E.g., start with the subtitle “Reasons for call-light use”, present the main results, and refer to table and so on. In addition it is suggested to split table 2. First as a table entitled “Characteristics of the study sample”, second as new table 3 entitled “Call-light related characteristics” and third as a new table 4 including the results as the variables reported by means and frequencies. These splits will increase overview of reported results and ease of reading in the text and its corresponding tables.

9. Reasons for call-light use (pg 10)

It is unclear why in the last sentence, only hospital 4 is specifically observed for the three leading reasons for call-light use. Rework is needed to clarify or skip this sentence.

10. DISCUSSION AND RELEVANCE TO CLINICAL PRACTICE (pg 12-15)

Start this section with an introduction; summarizing the performed study and its main results, then discuss/interpret each result sub section in view of background literature and/or plausibility in nursing practice. You may use the same subtitles.

In this part hospital policy and professional issues regarding responding to patient calls should be addressed.

11. Fifth research question (pg 14)

Before the last sentence, next step in research is indicated; this may belong to future research directions at page 15/16.

12. Study limitations and future research directions (pg 15/16)

Since patient reported outcomes regarding call-light use (e.g. by consumer assessment, inpatient satisfaction) could not be used to show its concordance with the results of the nurses self-reported measures used in this study this should be pointed out as a limitation before addressing future research directions.

Discretionary revisions

1. Table 1 (pg 19)

The paragraph “The indicated prevalence (in percentage) was then ranked among (…)” belongs rather to the methods section of the manuscript.

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