Reviewer's report

Title: Partnership disintegration for Primary Community-based Care Networks: a qualitative study for a national demonstration project

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2009

Reviewer: Phil Cotterell

Reviewer's report: Major Compulsory Revisions

Paper review

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper which explores why a project in Taiwan to develop partnerships between healthcare providers resulted in some providers withdrawing from the project. The paper offers interesting insights concerning the challenges of partnership working.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The need for this research is clearly explained at the bottom of page 5 and the research question is also well defined at the top of page 6.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The methods section would benefit from more description:

• There is some inconsistency in the description of methods. The rationale for utilizing a qualitative approach is inelegant. It is clear that obtaining rich in-depth material was the aim but this needs clearer explanation. There is reference to a grounded theory approach but further justification is required.

• I could not find mention of ethical considerations apart from informed consent having been secured. Were ethical permissions obtained; how was data managed?

• Within the section on data collection the explanation about validation of data is unclear. Was this participant validation/peer validation?

• In the section on analysis the last sentence is unclear “Finally, to release the information the texts were presented in their entirety.” What does this mean?
3. Are the data sound?

On the whole the data is engaging and well presented. The verbatim quotes from participants are congruent with the interpretations presented. Some of the sub-headings are unhelpful e.g. “Individual factors: recognizing the conflicting values designed within the PCCNs.” Such headings could more clearly relate to the data and be more explicit.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The paper and data is generally structured in an acceptable way however there is a need to revise in light of comments made in this review.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Some literature is drawn into the discussion but it would benefit from being more fully in tune with the vast literature on partnership working in healthcare both between professionals and patients. I think the discussion would be strengthened by reference to existing literature/debate and by making international comparisons.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

No. This needs to be addressed.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

There is reference to the author’s earlier work in this setting.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The title is not clear. Better use of language will help.

The abstract introduces concepts with no explanation e.g. ‘virtual vertical’ and ‘virtual horizontal.’ These terms are raised again in the methods but could be better explained in the introduction where connections to relevant work should be made (e.g. Murray, Poole and Jones, 2005). Otherwise the abstract accurately conveys the focus and findings of the research being reported.

9. Is the writing acceptable?

The paper is difficult to understand in places and has poor use of language scattered throughout. For example:

• In the introduction the term clinic-clinic and clinic-hospital needs clarification and at the bottom of page 5 “Therefore, with qualitative methodology…”
• In the methods section, “This is a qualitative study aimed to understand…”
• In the study subjects section, “This leads to the interviewing…”
• In the data collection section, “This study performed face to face….”
• In the discussion section, “This study used semi-structured interview questions with qualitative methodology.”
• Also in the discussion section on page 20, what does ‘mal-competition’ mean?
• In the conclusion the last sentence is confusing.

Also, some of the writing was difficult to understand and needs to be written in a clearer way e.g. in the results section, the last paragraph of page 14 beginning “The purpose of opening hours…”

Major Compulsory Revisions:
• The authors need to expand their description of method using the questions detailed in section 2.
• The discussion would be strengthened by incorporating wider literature and building on current debates.
• The quality/clarity of the writing needs addressing.
• Limitations of the study need to be articulated.
• Recommendations are needed for further research.

Level of interest: This is a paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests.

Quality of written English: In need of improvement.

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests.

**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.