Reviewer's report

Title: Facilitated patient feedback can improve the quality of nursing care: an exploratory cluster randomised controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 6 November 2012

Reviewer: Elizabeth Davies

Reviewer's report:

This is an important, elegantly designed and well-conducted study that is highly relevant for the implementation of health policies for patient-centred care around the world. There has been a significant difficulty in policy circles and in the research literature in coming to terms with the relative lack of influence of the feedback of patient experience survey data to services. This study begins to unpack and operationalise some of the reasons into a potentially effective intervention. It also warns against using less rigorous methods that are becoming fashionable in response to views that survey data 'doesn't work' or is not subjective enough.

One of the issues is to ensure that staff understand the data and this study shows the detailed and careful work that needs to be done to ensure they believe the results and take responsibility for them. I have only a few minor comments that might improve the paper.

Minor Essential

Introduction: There are no studies of in-patient care but there is one observational study of out-patient care Hildenhovi et al J of Advanced Nursing 2002;38:59-67 that it may be useful to quote as it does suggest some improvement. Also there is something to make of the improvement in cancer patients experiences in UK. Although it was top down it was informed by the survey data that led to various national initiatives in patient-centred care that were widely implemented.

Method: The process for giving or sending surveys to patients could be explained a bit more together with the reminder process. 47% is not a major response rate and it could be improved if nursing staff convey to staff that it is important they take part.

There could be more description of the method for collecting and reporting (and consent) for the observational part of the study from the meetings with nurses. The comments made by the nurses that appear to try to explain the survey results away are insightful. I can see why they may not be attributed to specific sites but we need to know a little more about the sample of comments from which they were drawn.

What are the components of the nursing score summary score? Was any data collected on the interventions that nurses used that may have related to the
changes. ie what does the change in score mean for patients and what had to be done to achieve it?

Results Table 1 might benefit from some bold lines to delineate the different trusts as it takes a while to orientate oneself to this. The text could also be expanded to spell out more simply the issue of the difficulty of analysis in the context of an overall decline in scores before launching into the regression analysis.

There is a minor error on page 7, line 7.

There seems to have been a problem, possibly relating to the administrative change in Trust B which affected the continuation of the study. Is it possible to say more about this? Is it not also possible that the study should be repeated in another setting because of these two complicating factors before going to a full trial?

Discretionary revisions:

There is a follow on study from Davies and Cleary (2005) of a study in Minnesota which shows some elements of an intervention that showed promise. There is also a recent study of the Veterans in Biomed HSR which identifies aspects of nursing leadership that may also be useful.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests