Reviewer's report

Title: How the stigma of low literacy can impair patient-professional spoken interactions and affect health: insights from a qualitative investigation

Version: 2 Date: 30 June 2013

Reviewer: Jennifer Ridgeway

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for your careful responses to reviewer comments. Your changes have dramatically improved your paper's flow and helped me, as a reader, follow more easily the links between the background, objective, methods and results.

Major Compulsory Revisions: None

Minor Essential Revisions: None

Discretionary Revisions:

1. The last paragraph under "Difficulties with written communication" could be edited for clarity and flow. For example, you could start the paragraph by stating that your findings on written communication are in line with previous research (citations as listed) and leave it at that. The subsequent sentences seem to fit better as a start to the next section: "Difficulties with spoken communication."

2. In the second paragraph of the Discussion section, you could add an example to illustrate the sentence "Our study has now helped to explain how literacy-related stigma can feature...." One idea is to bring this discussion point back to the causal pathways information included in the Introduction. I think that would be helpful in bringing the discussion full-circle to again highlight your first objective.

3. It would be helpful to see the total size of the sample in column headings and/or percentages in table rows. Some table rows could be reduced, e.g. sex could be reported simply as "Percent female." Also, looking at the table on its own (not after reading the entire article), I would not be able to fully understand "Long term condition." A table footnote defining this category or a better heading would be helpful. Finally, specific age groups would be helpful. It's not clear if teens is 13-19 years or some other years. You mention working age in the paper, but that age may differ by place. Consider listing as 16-19, 20-21, 30-31, etc.

4. In your limitations section you could highlight issues related to your sample characteristics, e.g. predominately women. You have noted the benefit of a diverse sample, but this would be a good place to add cautions, if there are any, as well.

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.