Reviewer’s report

Title: How do health professionals treat people on social assistance? A qualitative study among dentists in Montreal, Canada.

Version: 2 Date: 23 September 2013

Reviewer: Jenny Gallagher

Reviewer’s report:

This paper deals with an important issue and the authors are to be congratulated on tackling the topic; however, I would suggest that it requires a little further work to prepare the findings for publication but that this material should definitely be published. The following suggestions may be helpful to the authors in revising this paper:

1. Title – is this ‘treating’ or ‘perceiving’ people on social assistance – or both their perceiving and management of patients on social security.

2. Aim/Objective of the study should be clearly stated in the paper as well as the abstract. The authors may wish to consider whether the objective stated in the abstract is actually the objective investigated. The analysis is more about their perceptions rather than their treatment. An alternative is to consider patient management.

Methods

3. Sampling- the description of using a maximum variation strategy and saturation do not fit theoretically. If the former you must describe it in more detail and ideally you should have fulfilled this to get appropriate coverage. You may have missed a sector and the failed to get these views?

4. Recruitment - was an information letter/sheet provided for potential informants and did they have time to decide whether or not to participate? Did they have a clear explanation and time to ask questions before providing written consent?

5. Analysis: it would be most interesting and helpful to readers if the analysis could be taken further from a descriptive to an explanatory account moving beyond thematic analysis - perhaps developing hypothesis to be tested in future research

6. Three people were involved in coding – it would be helpful to describe how you reached agreement if there were differences?

Key findings: it is worth reviewing the labeling of the themes or concepts

7. Organisational issues: these appear to be ‘personal-organisational issues’ rather than systems organizational issues and perhaps the labeling should be more specific, as perhaps there should be health system organizational changes
to help these patients.

8. Biomedical issues: the term biomedical issues is confusing as it includes health service issues such as the limitations of the public health insurance programme (see note above)

9. Financial issues: this is a mix of system issues and individual issues

Discussion

10. This section could helpfully explore what further research may be helpful and consider interviewing patients on social assistance to triangulate the findings.

11. Also worth exploring the issue of quality in qualitative research and the extent to which this study represents quality.

12. Conclusion – the authors may wish to consider if these findings suggest a need also for better understanding of people on social assistance?

13. Finally, with a little further analysis this research could be hypothesis generating and this would significantly increase its contribution to the literature.

**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