Reviewer's report

Title: Case managers for older persons with multi-morbidity and their everyday work - a focused ethnography

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2013

Reviewer: Anne Hogden

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this article. It provides useful insights into the views of health professionals undertaking new roles, the responses from their clients and colleagues.

I believe the article would benefit from a number of changes, to clarify its purpose, integrate the findings and identify the contribution it makes to research. In summary:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? No
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes, but some rephrasing needed.
3. Are the data sound? Yes
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? N/A
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes, but the analysis and application of the findings in relation to care of adults with multi-morbidity could be improved.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes. Conclusions need expanding.
9. Is the writing acceptable? Some editing and restructuring required.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. Research question/aim: The research question in the Background section lacks definition (although is somewhat clearer in the abstract introduction). While the article aims to explore “the everyday work undertaken by case managers within a CM intervention...” the purpose of this exploration needs to be more clearly stated. Reworking the final paragraph of the Background section may assist in defining the aim and presenting a clear research question. The reader needs to better understand why you are undertaking this study, and how your findings can be applied to care of adults with multi-morbidity, and/or to models of case management. Was this study undertaken to evaluate the new case management service, or purely to describe it?
2. Writing: The article is long and descriptive narration. The writing would benefit from more concise expression. For example, information in the procedure section on observations and interviews should be summarised into a table. Similarly, the lengthy text reporting the results of the thematic analysis could be worked into a table or diagram. Some colloquial expressions are used that are unsuitable for academic writing.

3. Structure: The article would benefit from a restructure to break it up into smaller sections, particularly for readers unfamiliar with ethnographic approaches. For example, the results section should be structured to reflect the way the results are presented, ie results from observational data, and results from thematic analysis. A sentence at the start of the results section indicating that the data is presented in these two ways is needed. The authors should also indicate the reason the observational data is presented. Eg, what is the purpose of “...a narrative of a typical working day”?

4. Analysis: The two forms of results need to be integrated with each other, and linked back to a more defined research question to give triangulation.

The section ‘Implications for clinical practice’ needs to be expanded to discuss how your findings add to the model illustrated in Figure 1, and how they contribute to our understanding of the role of case managers and the broader case management model of care. Do your findings indicate how this model of case management benefits the care of older people with multi-morbidities?

The results section would benefit from dot points added to Figure 2, to concisely summarise the main findings within the three subthemes.

Minor essential revisions:

5. Editing. The writing of this article would be improved by tighter editing. Many sentences are too long, containing too many ideas. The first sentence of the methods section in the abstract provides a good example of a sentence that would benefit from breaking into smaller sentences.

6. Quotes are inconsistently labelled (eg pages 11 and 12). Please standardise.

Discretionary revisions:

7. The terms case manager and case management do not require capitalisation (unless abbreviated). Similarly, the keywords do not require capital letters.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.