Reviewer's report

Title: Appropriate disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia: identifying the key behaviours of 'best practice'

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2008

Reviewer: Anna Byszewski

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

This is a study which adds new evidence to the literature on the topic of disclosure of dementia, from the point of view of PWD and their carers. The authors have published in this area, including C. Bamford on a meta-analysis of this topic.

The methods included a literature review until 2004, interviews with 2 patients and 6 caregivers and a panel discussion using a modified Delphi method with 8 out of 10 approached panelists.

My major concerns stem from the following:

1. Literature review: the authors are correct that there were only two or three studies published from the views of PWD until July 2004, but since then there has been new work done and published in the last 4 years, including work done with our own group in Canada. This section needs to be updated, including reference to:

   a) Carpenter B, Dave J. Disclosing a dementia diagnosis, a review of opinion and practice, and a proposed research agenda. Gerontologist 2004;44:149-158

Abstract: The abstract, in the methods section should detail how many subjects were included in the interviews (interviews with 4 PWD and 6 caregivers) and how many were included in the consensus panel (8 panelists). The conclusion in the abstract really speaks to research methods, not to the title, which should summarize the real implications on clinical practice of the key behaviors. In results I have difficulty understanding "Three behaviours were selected for inclusion in the intervention, finding out what the patient..." â## what was the intervention?

In the methods section, page 3: Again, numbers re. numbers of subjects
interviewed or used for the panel need to be added. Why were only five transcripts from the interviews used to develop a thematic framework? On page 5, in section "interviews" it is implied that "eliciting the views of interviewees with dementia was not straightforward", so was this information not used? Then really this study does not add much new information as views of PWD were not included. This needs to be clarified as the reader may reach incorrect conclusions.

page 3, last paragraph. I don't like the use of the term "old age psychiatrists". It's derogatory to the older population, world wide a more widely accepted term is the proper title of a Geriatric Psychiatrist.

page 5, last paragraph. Who were the 8 of the 10 approached panelists? On page 3 we were told who were the 10 approached, but really we need to know who participated.

Table 1 and page 5, last paragraph.: I have difficulty putting this information into a useful clinical context. Perhaps the suggestion would be to reword the titles: what do the authors mean by "Factors", is that "how" to do the disclosure? And "components" are the "what to do" in the disclosure process? I would suggest some rewording of these concepts to make them clinically useful. I also don't understand the link to the content analysis on page 6 and Figure 3.

The reader is lost without a clear synthesis of concepts, instead of numbers or percentages of overlap. Especially if this is also based on interview with only 4 patients with dementia. Therefore I think it is presumptuous to make the statement on page 9 that ".we can be confident that we have considered the wide range of behaviors considered important" and "this is the most comprehensive work conducted to date".

Overall, the study design is attractive and if conducted with a larger group with more in depth analysis, could yield more interesting concepts.

I also did not notice any mention if this study was approved by a Research Ethics Board. This should be included.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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