Reviewer’s report

Title: Reconciling employment with caring for a husband with an advanced illness

Version: 1 Date: 16 June 2009

Reviewer: Emily Cherlin

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors posed a very important question of exploring the meaning of work for women caring for a husband with an advanced illness. This is an issue that is becoming more complex. The paper started out with great promise; however I think that more literature is needed in the background to support some of the statements. The authors state that “It becomes increasingly clear that taking on the caring role not necessarily implies a well-considered decision”. Further they make the point that careers views and preferences are less well represented in the literature, particularly those giving evidence of resistance to the role”. I think it would help to add a line or two just to expand on these ideas.

I think it is crucial for the authors to work on the methods of this paper. The authors need to first, present a clearer introduction of the study on which this work was based. Second, the methods need to greatly enhanced and properly cited so that the readers clearly understand the study design, why purposive sampling was chosen, and more about the analysis. It is important to clarify that steps were taken in the analyses to ensure the validity and reproducibility of the findings and I do not think this was addressed (see the work of Curry, Bradley and Devers 2007; Sofaer 1999; Patton 2002; Miles and Huberman 1994; Mays and Pope 1995.

I thought it was interesting the way the authors presented the results – first, presenting the themes illustrated by quotes, followed by the case studies. However again, I would have preferred if the authors highlighted the differences of these approaches and again, important to cite experts who have used these approaches. It would be nice to see more quotes and I also think including a table illustrating the key themes would add to the paper.

Table 1. I thought, was confusing. It might be better to revise the table just including the characteristics of the 15 wives that were interviewed for the paper.

I did not see any mention of limitations in the paper such as: the study took place in only one teaching hospital and in one community; the data was collected over 9 months, a longer time frame may have been optimal.

Minor Essential Revisions
Please proof the paper closely. In the abstract, COPD and MND should be spelled out. In Case 1, the first three sentences should be revised, especially repeating twice that the interview subject of a magazine. In Case 2, I was curious - what is “nippy”? 

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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