Reviewer’s report

Title: Managing the consultation with patients with medically unexplained symptoms: a grounded theory study of supervisors and registrars in general practice

Version: 5  Date: 25 September 2014

Reviewer: Sarah Peters

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this revised manuscript. I think it is much improved and would make a good addition to the literature. There are some minor points that still need revision.

Minor Essential Revisions
Line 78, Background 4th paragraph. ‘…shaping these symptom[s] clusters..’
Line 126, Study design. ‘Data [was] were..’
Line 133, Sampling. Sentence on purposive sampling to challenge and refine is repeated on line 142.
Sentence required in the Methods section to explain that interviews were conducted, what they covered (e.g. was a topic guide followed, what topics were included), who they were conducted by and where (e.g. face-to-face/telephone).
Line 434, there are two headings (model for understanding the consultation and a theoretical model for the consultation)
Discussion section still requires study a section on strengths and limitations of the study.
References 11 and 21 are the same.

Discretionary Revisions
Linda Gask published a narrative systematic review of reattribution which pulls together the literature on reattribution.
Table 3 is helpful way to present the parallels between the experiences. The experience of patients is drawn from the literature. Clearly it was not possible within this study to do this from a systematic/meta-synthesis of the literature, but I have some concerns that this is largely a rather dated literature (most references are range between 1957 and the 1990s). There is more recent evidence that patients don’t simply have ‘no explanatory framework’ (as suggested in Table 2) but have complex and chaotic illness models (e.g. Peters et al, JGIM, 2009).
Given a key message in the paper is a comparison of practitioners’ experiences and patients (as depicted in the literature) this could be more up to date.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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'