Reviewer’s report

Title: "Was that a success or not a success?": a qualitative study of health professionals' perspectives on support for people with long-term conditions

Version: 0 Date: 14 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Sharon Spooner

Reviewer’s report:

My review is based on qualitative research and general clinical experience rather than as an expert in either of the studied chronic conditions or as a developer of performance criteria.

This paper makes a useful contribution to understanding the multifaceted work of interacting with patients who have evolving long-term conditions and the limits of current methods of evaluating performance/success.

Introduction

Introduction would benefit from additional information about the wider project in order to better understand the context/paradigm. In particular it would be helpful to elaborate concepts such as what is seen as 'meaningfully good' and 'philosophically defensible'.

Methods

Overall this provides a reasonable description, but could be improved.

It would be useful to have an indication of the process by which 'key issues' were identified for inclusion in the initial topic guide.

Authors confirm that participant recruitment was somewhat narrow - which I feel warrants further discussion/ justification. Did they attempt to recruit by alternative routes or simply accept a restricted pool of participants (bearing in mind that 5 individually-interviewed people also participated in focus groups)?

Nothing is included to indicate the nature of or extent to which 'philosophical theory' informed data generation (or analysis)

Results

The first section of results (Aspects and elements of success) is clearly organised and creates a useful basis for consideration of how success and quality are assessed.
However, I did not find data in Box 5 helpful - read in isolated, this data appears disjointed and by making reference to unseen vignettes makes no useful contribution.

Under Assessing success and the quality of practice - here I feel that contrasting views could have added to exploration of a contested element of the paper i.e. views on how useful/restricted are the evaluative measures currently in place? Also, although health professionals expressed concern and reflected broadly on their roles wrt SSM, it is notable that they do not appear to reflect more deeply on what constitutes good professional practice or on how delivering high quality SSM differs/does not differ from delivery of good practice per se.

This section is comprehensive in reviewing individual areas of concern over the appropriateness of measures of success, but could be more concise.

Limitations

Although the authors have recognised that the limited number of individually-interviewed participants were mostly already aware of and concerned about ideas and practices surrounding SSM, they have not stated how this may have skewed their findings or shown how they sought to minimise such bias or seek alternative perspectives (e.g.practitioners who are fully accepting of prioritising biophysical markers). They have included quotes from less than half of the individual interviewees - by quick count 19 of the 27 named data extracts are from just 5 of the 26 interviewed individuals.

Because both diabetes and Parkinson's disease frequently affect patients who have multiple chronic conditions, I would have expected participants to reflect on the significance of multi-morbidity/poly-pharmacy in successful negotiation of SSM - but this is not present in the paper.

The discussion and conclusion highlight the complexity and situatedness of managing long-term conditions which generally deteriorate over time, however I cannot see a clear indication of how the authors believe it would be useful to further investigate this or develop more use-appropriate measures of success in SSM.

The paper is generally well-written, though at a number of points it requires revisions to reduce long and convoluted sentences (e.g. Discussion Paragraph 1)

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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