Reviewer's report

Title: Patient-centered factors associated with hepatitis C treatment: a qualitative study

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Reviewer: Sheryl Szeinbach

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Overall, the focus group study via telephone interviews was appropriate. The investigators obtained useful information from the interviews for use in a larger and more extensive study.

Major:

Background information is helpful, but the study needs a stronger foundation. For example, there appears to be no theoretical background for the research? Was some type of model used to develop the study? How was the interview guide developed?

What qualitative research approach was used in the study? Were guidelines for outcomes research followed? For example, The FDA patient-reported outcomes guidelines would provide a foundation for the research presented. How did the investigators go from the items and dimensions to a conceptual model?

How was content validity assessed in the study? What studies have already been performed in this area? Did a literature review guide the development of questions for use in the study?

How was this information from the literature used to develop the interview guide for the study?

Was item saturation reached? This would let us know that enough individuals were sampled.

More information is needed about these patients regarding their separation into groups. What were the selection criteria? Why were they assigned to the groups from a clinical standpoint? More detail is needed.

At what point was the instrument for the study developed?

Was cognitive debriefing used to assess content and face validity?

What other limitations exist with patients selected from the VA? Age?

Conceptual framework as presented is very confusing. There are what appear to be items and dimensions with arrows everywhere. Are these factors? Was a factor analysis performed? What is the proposed causal relationship among these items and dimensions? Standard nomenclature for reporting conceptual frameworks should be used. The overall conceptualization process is missing from the development of the conceptual framework. For example,
shared-decision making is mentioned throughout the manuscript, yet there is no mention of shared decision making in the conceptual framework. It is not clear how the dimensions are related conceptually - conceptualization is also important for study validation.

Minor
Line – 41 – typo than # that; several other minor edits are needed throughout the manuscript

Summary
However, preliminary results from this study do provide a framework for future research. The research question “Little work has been done to examine and understand the factors that patients consider in making the decision to pursue or forego CHC treatment” is a very important question. How can this research project continue? As a suggestion, a more extensive development of the criteria by which these patients are assigned to these three groups is needed, along with a more substantial study background in theory and methods for the research. Also, what about patients who start therapy then stop? What about patients who complete therapy?

Using the outcome and clinical measures from this study and from the literature, suggest performing a MANOVA along with the estimation of effect size, which would inform us of the importance of group differences, and may provide more insight as to why patients with HCV undergo or refuse treatment.

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

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:

received funding from Abbvie in the past five years in this area - not currently working on a project in this area -- all papers have been published -- no papers in this area under review -