Author's response to reviews

Title: Home Support Workers Perceptions of Family Members of their Older Clients: A Qualitative Study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear BMC Geriatrics Editorial Review Committee,

Re: BMC MS: 1836920853152648

We are submitting the revisions requested of our manuscript BMC MS: 1836920853152648  " Home Support Workers Perceptions of Family Members of their Older Clients: A Qualitative Study ". We thank the reviewers for their thoughtful feedback.

We have noted changes in the manuscript by page, paragraph and line numbers in our revision responses, and provided notes about the changes made after each reviewer’s comments (in italicized text) on the pages accompanying this letter. Please note that we have numbered reviewers’ feedback items to facilitate clear and thorough responses to each item.

We appreciate the constructive feedback of the reviewers and believe the manuscript has been improved by these revisions. We look forward to hearing back from you in due course.
Response to Reviewers

Authors’ replies in italics. Please note page numbers refer to the marked version of the revised manuscript.

Review One:
Reviewer: Vivian W. Q. Lou
Reviewer’s report: Minor Essential 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: NIL
Author’s response: There were no changes suggested by the reviewer. We have conducted a comprehensive copy edit of the manuscript.

Review Two:
Reviewer: Fei Wu
Reviewer’s report: Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract Background

1. It would be better if the authors had briefly discussed the significance of the study (e.g., improve clients experience care, and connect the formal and informal care system).

Author’s response: We have add a statement on the significance of the study p. 2, lines 46, 47.

2. Methods I understand the need to be succinct while writing an abstract. However, the methods section is a little awkward to read.

Author’s response: We have edited this section to include additional pertinent information p. 2, lines 49-52.

Background

3. It would be helpful to also introduce the current care system for the elderly in Canada (or British Columbia in particular) and the role of home-based care in the system. It will also help the readers to identify the significance of this important work.

Author’s response: We have added a statement on the current system in Canada p. 3, lines 69-73.

4. The logic of focusing on the HSW’s perspective of family members who also provide care only came clear on page 5 line 113-117. My understanding of the authors reasoning is that there is a shortage of HSW and their retention has been identified as a major issue in supporting home
It is important to understand the issue from the HSW’s perspective in the community context. However, past literature is limited and mainly focused on family members’ perceptions or within the residential care environment. The Background section can be rearranged in a way that smoothly leads the audience to your study focus on HSW rather than family members or both.

Author’s response: We agree that this was unclear. We have moved the statement on page 5. to the beginning of the background literature to set the rationale. The section is now on p. 4, lines 94-98. We believe this better introduces the importance of focusing on HSWs perspectives of family members.

5. Was there any theoretical framework guiding the study? I would like to see a discussion on the theoretical background/relevance of the study.

Author’s response: Our work was guided by a socioecological approach. We have added this to the background section p. 5, lines 126 – 130.

Methods

6. Did the analysis team use any software dedicated to analyzing qualitative data?

Author’s response: We used Nvivo 10 software. We have added this on p.7 line 162.

7. Did the analytical process follow any guidelines for conducting qualitative research?

Author’s response: We had added a new section on the use of framework analysis with references on p. 7, lines 166 – 175. This new section details our analytical process.

Results

8. Is it possible to provide a little more than pseudo names while using direct quotes from participants, such as age and work status (full-time vs. part-time) ?

Author’s response: Unfortunately our ethics will not allow us to share any additional information.

9. Again, the way the results section was organized following a certain theoretical framework? Or the researchers just let the themes emerge themselves and then constructed their own theory of home based care?

Author’s response: We were guided by a socioecological approach and we now present the themes from the individual perspective and then the cross cutting organizational theme regarding the Care Plans. We agree that re-ordering of sections likely makes the results read in a more intuitive manner.

Discussion/Conclusion

10. In my opinion, the authors started to discuss or draw conclusions from line 351, page 14, because it is not a presentation of results anymore, but more of a summary and discussion of the results.

Author’s response: We agree with the reviewer. We have moved this section into the conclusion section. We have removed some redundancy in the conclusion.

11. Family members can provide informational and instrumental help that facilitates HSW’s work. Meanwhile, there are both individual level factors and organizational level factors that make it
difficult to work with family members of elderly clients. Intentionally or unintentionally treating HSW as a servant to the whole family creates extra instrumental work for the workers. Family members being rude and suspicious also created extra emotional work for the HSWs. In addition, rigid organizational care plan also creates extra communication work between the family member and the HSW. What seems to mitigate and connect the family member and HSW is the empathy workers hold toward their clients and their families. If this is a correct summary of how the results section is being organized, can the discussion section follow the same positive, negative, and mitigating factors so it is easier to follow? I recommend using subtitles like the results section so these two sections correspond to each other.

Author’s response: We have re-ordered the results/discussion section so it better reflects a socio-ecological framework – starting with the individual level concerns and ending with organizational concerns. We have also followed this pattern in the conclusion section. Given that the conclusion section is integrated – we discuss positive, negative and mitigating factors and their relationship as oppose to presenting them separately it is difficult to insert sub-titles. We hope that the reviewer is satisfied with the re-ordering and the movement of text from the results to the conclusion. We have added two sub-headings, an implications and a limitations subheading.

12. I think the authors can integrate discussion and conclusion into one section.

Author’s response: The guidelines for BMC request a separate discussion and conclusion section so we have not collapsed them but rather we have moved content from the discussion to the conclusion as per the reviewer’s requests above.

13. I like how the authors discussed the implications of the current difficulties faced by the HSW. It would make this article even stronger if there are recommendations on the individual, inter-personal, as well as organizational levels to improve the HSW-family member relationship.

Author’s response: We have added an implications subheading, p.23 line 539 to highlight where we discuss implications at the individuals and organizational level.

Limitations

14. What about other limitations besides not getting the family members’ side of the story? For example, the study was conducted within one city in Canada. It was limited to HSW with a certain English proficiency.

Author’s response: We have added limitations to this section, p. 24, lines 563-566.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.