Reviewer’s report

Title: "They don't care about us": Older people's experiences of primary healthcare in Cape Town, South Africa

Version: 0 Date: 13 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Catherine Tong

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper. The authors provide a thoughtful analysis of multilingual data collected with diverse, difficult-to-access older adults, and their efforts should be commended. Below, I provide specific edits and questions, which I believe would improve the clarity of this manuscript. In addition to these specific comments, this paper lacks a theoretical framework and/or positioning. Perhaps tapping into the "person-centered care" literature in both the introduction and discussion would ameliorate this.

Abstract

Line 5: as people age, they may have different health needs to younger people.

- "may" is incorrect. They most definitely have different needs. Also, there is a word missing. Perhaps "different needs compared to younger people"?

- Also, "as people age… people are "aging" from the day they are born. It would be more accurate to write "older adults" or "older persons"

Line 7: community-based care and primary heath care. In this sentence these two systems of care are presented as similar, but in many countries community-based care and primary health care are two very different systems of care, one delivered by physicians (primary care) and one delivered by paraprofessionals (community-based care). Please consider revising to make clear that in South Africa, community-base care includes primary health care, if this is indeed the case.

Line 38: "Patients who received more patient-centered care had more positive perceptions of healthcare providers and the quality of care they received." It is not surprising or particularly insightful that people receiving person centered care have more positive perceptions of their care. Are there any other key findings that you could tease out of your data to shine a light on any new knowledge that your study generates?

Background:

Page 3, line 43. For a reader unfamiliar with the term 'coloured' as opposed to 'black', could you please distinguish the two. Also, is the term 'coloured' appropriate in the South African context?
For international readers, for example in the United States, this is a highly racialized charged term that one would not use.

Page 3, line 48. This is the end of a long sentence. 73.5% of which group is on medical aid, whites or non-whites? It isn't clear.

Page 6, line 2. The sentence "Few of the studies that do exist are focused on community-dwelling adults, which comprise the majority of older persons [10, 23, 40, 42]" is not clear. Please revise.

Page 6, line 15. The statement… "and also demonstrates the stark income-related disparities that exist in terms of access to and quality of care" is more of a result/discussion point, please consider moving to a later portion of the paper.

Subheadings- Before 'Research Setting' consider adding a higher-level heading for METHODS.

Page 6, line 35. You note that Sea Point is largely English speakers. Are they also 'white'? (The other two sites list both the predominant language and race).

Page 6, line 45. Could you provide some sort of statistic or perhaps a USD or Euro equivalent of R1600, to give international readers a sense of how much money/purchasing power this is?

Page 7, line 1. As I'm sure you are aware, there are a multitude of established approaches to qualitative research. Which qualitative traditions informed your approach to data collection analysis. Please be more explicit about the type of qualitative research you used, your epistemology and approach to the data. If this was a 'generic qualitative study', or 'non-categorical' qualitative study, please say so, with appropriate references.

Page 7, line 49. Earlier you note that this analysis was part of a larger study on "people's experiences of ageing in these communities". Were the 60-90 minute focus groups dedicated to the topic in this manuscript (experiences of the health care system) or were these focus groups focus on the broader topic of "experience of ageing". If the later, approximately what percentage of the focus groups were dedicated specifically to discussions of the health care system?

Page 7, line 59. Data collection. Who translated the transcripts? And how did you ensure the rigour of the translations? Were all the files translated to English for analysis? More detail please.

Page 8, line 8. This is the first mention of field notes. When did the authors complete field notes? (During the focus groups? During analysis?)

Page 8, line 8. Which version of NVivo, please. Also, please provide references for open coding and thematic coding.

Page 8, line 16. How and when were findings shared with community partners? Verbally? In a report? In a Powerpoint presentation? And did their feedback impact the findings in any way?
Were the findings shared during the analysis or after the analysis was complete? More detail please.

Results

Page 10, line 8. Could you please (either here, or earlier at the first mention of Medical Aid) provide the reader with a bit more information on what Medical Aid is in South Africa (it connotes different things in different countries).

Page 14, line 47. I appreciate that you invoke some literature that examined the experiences of workers here.

There are very few quotes from the Sea Point focus groups and perhaps an over-reliance on quotes from the Khayelitsha FGs. Could you balance this out a bit, please? Or, alternatively, be more explicit about which themes relate to which FGs (most themes appear to relate to the poorer, non-White focus groups- is this the case?)

Discussion & Conclusion

Overall the discussion is well-written, adequately referenced, and reflective of the results.

Page 20, line 25. The following is more of a 'result', please consider removing from the discussion and adding to the results. "For example, some patients wanted x-rays for diagnostic purposes when they were perceived as unnecessary by doctors, or expected electrocardiograms (ECGs) or blood tests as part of general health checkups, seeing their inability to access these services as denial of care."

There are many references to 'patient-centered care' throughout the paper, but no definition and few references. Please provide a description of what you mean by 'patient-centered care' with additional references to this established body of literature.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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

Unable to assess

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?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal