Reviewer's report

Title: The dignified approach to care: using the Patient Dignity Question as an intervention to enhance dignity and person-centred care for people with palliative care needs in the acute hospital setting

Version: 2 Date: 28 January 2015

Reviewer: Melissa J Bloomer

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your manuscript.

I have include some revisions that I believe are essential to improving the quality of your manuscript:-

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

In the background section:- Some discussion about how patients with palliative care needs in acute care settings is needed. Such as how are they identified, how are their pall care needs addressed in acute care?

Are they automatically transferred to a pall care specialist unit?

Do you have a specialist pall care unit in this hospital?

Do you have a pall care clinical nurse consultant or other pall care specialist who is available to support your acute care staff in providing pall care?

How is 'pall care need' determined? Do all members of the treating team (doctors, nurses, allied health) have an opportunity to contribute to the determination of pall care need?

Can patients with pall care needs still receive active care? The reader needs this information to better understand the context in which the study took place. You also need to talk about families and their role as proxy-decision makers. This is important because you go on to recruit family members. You will also have to talk about their readiness and acceptance of the need for palliative care, and how this might impact upon their appropriateness for this study

Line 131 hyphenate patient-centred for consistency

Line 137 and 139 - referencing should be before the full stop, not after

Line 166-167 join the two sentences to make one paragraph

Line 176 In the section under the heading 'Participants' you need to further explain what you mean by patients with palliative care needs. How was this determined? Is it only applicable to those who were imminently dying, those with an NFR/DNR order? Or those with palliative care needs in a more broader sense? For example, a patient with a new diagnosis of mesothelioma will have obvious palliative care needs but may be many months/year from dying. How was 'with palliative care needs' determined?

Line 180 Were there any patients who were deemed 'not appropriate' for
inclusion? A patient may be identified as having palliative care needs, but they may not yet be at the point of acceptance. So to approach someone for inclusion in this study, when they have not yet accepted that they may have a terminal diagnosis or need pall care is inappropriate. You need to expand on this.

Line 186 - change 'health professionals' to HCP (you have used this elsewhere. This means you can then delete everything else contained in the brackets.

Line 195 - replace 'outwith' with another word

Line 203-204 Join the sentences to make one paragraph

Line 204 replace healthcare staff with HCPs

Line 212 what do you mean when you say that the researcher agreed any necessary changes with the patient??? If you ask the patient to answer the PDQ, then their answer should be valid however they choose to respond. Altering a patient’s answer so that it is more 'acceptable' for the study is not appropriate. You need to explain what you did and why

Line 212 change the sentence to say 'requested the patients' permission

Line 213-217 please give some timelines for how quickly the patient had to complete the various measures. More specifically, what time frame was there between the pre and post intervention questionnaires? You talk elsewhere about the short timeline so I think it is important to articulate what sort of time frame you are talking about here. 2 hours?? 2 days?

Line 223-225 remove blank spaces

Line 238 change to members'

Line 245 which version of SPSS?

Line 271 (recruitment section). I am concerned who you only got 4 relatives when you had 30 patients? Is this a result of the short timeline? If you aimed for one relative for every patient, then only recruiting 4 seems quite disappointing. Please elaborate. I know you have identified it as a limitation, but you need to add more detail in the recruitment section as well. What if family members didn’t do the survey because they were not 'ready' to accept that their loved one needs palliative care? Did they even know their loved one had a terminal diagnosis? lots of important detail missing here

Line 400 - join onto line 396 to form one paragraph line 402 change to patient participants

Line 406 join onto line 404 to make one paragraph line 406 change to HCPs line 427 join on to previous paragraph line 446 as detailed earlier, you need to expalain what you mean by the short time frame. It sounds like you rushed it and this is a real floor of the project. You cant make assumptions or conclusions for family based on only 4. What might the other 26 have said?

Line 473 - join to previous paragraph line 501 add a space between paragraphs line 510 add a line between paragraphs line 513 add to previous paragraph line 539 add a space between paragraphs line 551
ditto line 551 to 556 - this is weak and a bit presumptuous because you only had
4 relatives

Line 564, line 577, line 589, line 602, line 612 add a line between paragraphs

Line 635 join to previous sentence line 636 same issue with time constraints. It seems like you cut quality in order to meet deadlines

Discussion - Once the extra detail is added to the intro and other sections (as suggested above) then this needs to be teased out in the discussion

Line 663 add a line space

Line 666 ditto

Line 672 ditto.

16 tables is excessive and likely beyond the number that the journal can realistically publish. You need to use your discretion in determining what tables really need to be included. More tables does not value add!

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: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no conflict of interests