Reviewer's report

Title: Social workers' involvement in advance care planning: a systematic narrative review

Version: 0 Date: 24 May 2017

Reviewer: Jessica Simon

Reviewer's report:

This is a novel and important systematic review of the literature, with thematic analysis on the role of social workers in Advance Care Planning (ACP). Themes that emerge pertain to social workers perceptions/attitudes toward ACP, their perceived role in the process, ethical issues, impact of social worker involvement on patient engagement in ACP. This work is a useful addition to the literature as it seeks to summarize and characterize social worker current involvement and potential role in this process, while including an international comparative lens. They authors usefully explore how the heterogeneity in definitions of ACP and advance directives, variations in inter professional teams, healthcare sector, SW education and culture are all factors in the variation in how SW perceive and practice globally.

There are minor grammatical errors that need correcting throughout the manuscript. E.g. needing to add an "s" to a number of verbs throughout the manuscript and I suggest a proof reader correct these before publication. In addition, the following edits are suggested, of which the additional detail in the methods (page 5) is the likely the most important.

Page 3, line 34-40 This sentence is awkward. You may want to consider removing 'even though educational programs on death and dying or palliative and EOL care in general may be provided to them' as this is stated in the previous sentence. You can also change 'acknowledged' to 'present' or 'less commonly provided'.

Page 4 line 29 Please change 'in' to 'is'.

Page 4 line 33 Please reword 'greatly fragmented'. It is not clear what you mean by this term.

Page 5 line 48-Page 6 line 10 Please expand this section to describe number of authors who read each abstract, how consensus was reached and discrepancies resolved. Please also provide a description of how 'research themes' were identified/developed. Adding a PICOS table to the methods section would also help readers (participants, interventions, comparisons, outcomes, and study design)

Page 6 line 7-8 Please change this sentence to past-tense.

Page 6 Line 26 Please change 'The included articles included'. You do not need 'included' twice. You may want to consider 'Selected articles included'.
Page 6 Line 32 Please change 'were' to 'used' or 'utilized'.

Page 6 Line 37 Please reword this sentence. It is not clear whether these studies included samples of only social workers or a mixture of professionals.

Page 7 line 34-36 Please take out 'much'

Page 7 line 39-55 The title of this section refers broadly to ACP but the description of articles appears to only refer to the completion of ADs. Since this is only one part of ACP, please provide an indication of whether any studies examined other aspects of ACP activities and if not, please state this.

Page 10 Consider using sub-headings to make the discussion section easier to read. For example: International comparisons of Social Worker Roles, etc.

Page 10 line 4 Please change 'completion' in the title to 'engagement' as ACP is an ongoing process.

Page 12 line 4-6 This seems to be new information (not mentioned in the results section) regarding role confusion and knowledge on life sustaining treatments. You may want to refer to these data points in the Results section before discussing them further here.

Page 12 line 24-35 Findings on timing of ACP discussions are similarly not clear in the results section. Please include a description there first. You may want to merge a discussion of 'timing' with one on 'roles' (see above comment) as timing really does describe an aspect of roles, i.e. how they get involved in ACP discussions. Suggest you provide a heading for this paragraph also.

Page 13 line 40-46 This sentence is not clear. Were differences not studied or sufficiently explored? Please clarify.

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?
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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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