Reviewer’s report

Title: Honoring the Voices of Bereaved Palliative Caregivers: A Metasummary of Qualitative Research

Version: 0 Date: 05 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Jan Christian Frich

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript reports findings from a literature review/metasummary of qualitative research on experiences of bereaved family caregivers. The aim is to explore the experiences of bereaved family caregivers of people who received palliative care, regardless of their underlying disease.

The manuscript states that nearly half of all Canadians will act as family caregivers at some point in their life. There is no reference to document this statement, and it also seems strange to use Canada as a starting point as long as the scope of the study is global. The fact that availability and content of palliative care services probably varies a lot world-wide should be addressed in the introduction, as the study focuses specifically on people who have received palliative care.

The abstract lists major findings in the conclusion section. I would prefer to place these major findings in the result section, and rather list conclusions/implications based on these in the conclusion section.

Sandelowski and Barroso's qualitative metasummary method is used, and 47 qualitative studies are included. The PRISMA flow chart is okay, but it would be nice to know more about the search strategy. I do not think is appropriate that this is «available on request» (page 6) when it may be available in an appendix published online.

The metasummary method seems to rely partly on a quantitative approach. I question the whole concept of «effect size calculation» in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie). The whole concept confuses very different study designs. I think it is fair to study the distribution or frequency of themes, but I oppose both the idea that such frequencies represent any «effects», and I also oppose the idea that a more frequent occurrence of a theme correlates with a higher «validity». Valid for whom? Valid in which context and setting? Validity is something you have to put forward arguments for. With regards to this it is interesting that an important conclusion seems to be that health professionals should acknowledge «the unique situation of the caregiver cautions against the danger of generalizing the bereaved caregiver experience» (page 24).

Results: I think the themes identified in the literature captures many important dimensions of caregivers' experiences. The material is well organized. The aim of the study was «to explore the
experiences of bereaved family caregivers of people who received palliative care, regardless of their underlying disease». What I miss is an exploration of the experiences with palliative care services. Where there no mentioning of this in the studies? This study was published later than the time scope of the present review, but the interaction with professionals was an important theme, just to mention one example: Lerum SV, Solbrække KN, Frich JC. Family caregivers' accounts of caring for a family member with motor neurone disease in Norway: a qualitative study. BMC Palliative Care 2016; 15: 22.


Discussion: Should the paragraph «overarching findings» at p. 21 be placed in the discussion section? I miss experiences/interaction between caregiver and professionals in the discussion section. The conclusion focuses on assessments, recognition, services and professional support. What does the current literature have to offer of insights in support of any recommendations about how palliative care services can interact with caregivers to alleviate their suffering?

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.

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

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