Reviewer’s report

Title: Healthcare professionals’ views of palliative care for American war veterans with nonmalignant respiratory disease living in a rural area: a qualitative study

Version: 3 Date: 16 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?
Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: An important study
Useful definition for the study - Non-Malignant Respiratory Disease is an umbrella term that includes Interstitial Lung Disease (ILD), bronchiectasis and COPD.

Important information to set the scene of the study for the reader. 20.4 million war veterans and COPD is the fourth most prevalent condition amongst veterans. And in relation to palliative care, War veterans can experience multiple physical and psychological symptom complexities due to their exposure to war and combat situations and so making it more challenging. I understand that
an objective of this study is that the subjects are representative of a rural community through a 'convenience sample' of 16 healthcare professionals so that one can see the palliative care needs of veterans in such a community. And this is important as "American war veterans often live in sparsely populated areas."

The stated aim is clear - This study aimed to explore palliative care provision for veterans with non-malignant respiratory disease, and their informal carers, living in a rural area of America.

Method - a good variety profession wise of participants
"Data collection was completed when it was noted by the lead author that no new themes or information were emerging from the data." - so saturation was reached of the qualitative methodology.
Good that the transcriptions were reviewed.
Ethics approval gained

This is a good point - Limitations Findings only represented the perspectives of healthcare professionals and not the patients or informal carers own perspective.

Results - the verbatim comments are very helpful.
Helpful conclusion and also providing the abbreviations used at the end.

A detailed review of the literature with 46 references

REQUESTED REVISIONS:
Where is Idaho in the USA and how representative is it of a rural area in the USA?

Questions about the methodology - the focus groups seem quite small - what is the definition of a focus group size as (n=3, n=2, n=4, n=4, n=3) seem quite small numbers? I was not entirely clear what the "broad interpretivist approach was utilised" is - another sentence of explanation would be helpful for the reader. Therefore how Table 3 was arrived at and so the opening results; "Analysis of the healthcare professional focus groups identified two key overarching themes: 1) barriers to providing appropriate palliative care to veterans with NMRD; and 2) future direction of palliative care for veterans with NMRD. The overarching and interpretative themes are outlined in Table 3."

for verbatim comments anonymity was maintained - Although I note that there was only one social worker and case manager- could these be identified from the Pseudonym allocated eg SW1 in particular and Case Manager CM1?

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:
As detailed above

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.
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:

Acceptable

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