Reviewer’s report

Title: How to Come to Terms with Facing Death: A Qualitative Study Examining the Experiences of Patients with Terminal Cancer

Version: 1 Date: 08 Nov 2018

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?
No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
No - there are minor issues

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
No - there are minor issues

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Could an appropriately REVISED version of this work represent a technically sound contribution?
Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: Introduction / background appropriately detailed and good to see the phrase ‘spiritual pains’ used, and to address the issue in the literature that; "To date, no studies have focused on how terminal cancer patients achieve mental stability at this stage of life, and no methods have been established to provide nursing support for patients' attempts in this regard."
It is an interesting finding that for the potential third interview that; "no participant requested that a family member attend"

Ethical approval - it is good that an "interview was conducted only when a doctor, nurse, and nurse manager in charge judged that the interview was possible." Also given the nature of the research that; "We verbally verified every 15 minutes after the start of the interview whether the participant was able to continue."

The psychophenomenological approach of 5 steps is detailed and so the fact that there is no saturation point with respect to deriving phenomenological meaning (Can this be clarified, as a saturation point is usually reached with qualitative research?)

Thank you for explaining about the Japanese word "Shouganai"  
Also - the "Japanese have a fatalistic idea "Shouganai" towards they cannot change anything." Should a statement be added about how this may differ with other countries / cultures?

The verbatim text quotations are very helpful and illustrative for the reader

These quotations are important, but quite painful to read. The themes chosen / emerged are appropriate. ("The following five themes emerged for the experience of reaching mental stability when facing death in patients with terminal cancer at home or in a PCU.")

There seems an appropriate review of the literature with 42 references

REQUESTED REVISIONS:
Study Design needs a little more explanation - "The present study was based on a psychophenomenological approach, which is a descriptive phenomenology originating from Husserl's philosophy."

Why were 16 patients as a number chosen originally and were there any limitations with having just 11 respondents? Particularly as it is stated that saturation could not be reached with the research method used which seems unusual as the method appears to be qualitative. Also could some more information be provided as to who decided and if there was a measure to decide which "Patients exhibited depressed mood or intense grief (i.e., because they had been unable to reach mental stability)" - how was this judgment made as their views in relation to spiritual pain would be particularly important and certainly would need a lot of support had they been included. In relation to the ethical committee approval was support offered to patients who were interviewed that did experience distress?

From the discussion as detailed above can the authors make comparison with other countries based on the statement; "Their feelings swing between acceptance of death (i.e., "I have to accept it") and the desire to live, and this is part of the preparation for death in Japan." (It is addressed about the numbers who wish to die at home in other countries and the figures of those who actually die at home.) Should it be added to the title at the end; 'In Japan'? this may overcome the
need to refer to what happens in other countries in relation to the 5 themes that have been identified.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Need to check English eg page 5;

"This study are expected to lead to the provision of appropriate nursing assistance and advances in palliative nursing skills." The psychophenomenological approach of 5 steps is detailed and so the fact that there is no saturation point with respect to deriving phenomenological meaning - Can this be clarified, as a saturation point is usually reached with qualitative research?)

"Shouganai" - Should a statement be added about how this may differ with other countries / cultures?

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.

No

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

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

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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