Reviewer’s report

Title: Views of professionals and volunteers in palliative care on patient-centred care: a Q-methodology study in the Netherlands

Version: 0 Date: 05 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Maria Arantzamendi

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the article "Views of professionals and volunteers in palliative care on patient-centred care: a Q-methodology study in the Netherlands"

Aim:

The aim is to explore how professionals and volunteers involved in palliative care delivery view Patient Centred Care (PCC).

It may be worthy considering a secondary objective: to explore the views of volunteers on PCC and to see whether their views align with or differ from those of the professionals (This idea I get it from the last phrase of Background section).

Background:

Article provides a definition of the key concept and the eight dimensions, which helps the reader to understand the conceptual framework. The suggestion is to include some evidence on the benefits of PCC, it will help to make argument stronger on the importance of this work.

In the background one of the arguments says "However, previous studies have shown that views on the relative importance of these eight dimensions for PCC may differ, between professionals as well as between patients [7, 8]. Understanding such differences is important because different views on PCC may translate into different priorities for care delivery. …" The paper is about professionals views so the suggestion is to modulate the argument.

The background needs to include a wider international perspective considering the international audience. The suggestion is to reduce the information on Netherlands and set a worldwide context about PCC and Palliative care professionals views. Some of the information about Palliative care in Netherlands may be useful -if appropriate for the participants setting.
Methods section:

Design: The suggestion is to explain in more detail the Q-methodology, which may not be so familiar for readers. Start the design section saying: Q-methodology was used to achieve study objectives. Then explain how Q-methodology is adequate for a systematic study of subjectivity, a person's viewpoint, opinion, beliefs, attitude, and the like (Brown 1993).

Participants: Add a section on setting and participants, including how they were sampled, total number of participants.

Statements: It is clear that previous studies have been used to develop the final set of 35 statements. Where these final statements piloted? What can you add about them to show adequacy of them?

Data collection: The information that the study was performed in 2 hospitals and 6 hospices needs to go into participants section; with a description of the characteristics of these settings as it may influence professionals and volunteers perspective. Please also move to results the information of percentage of respondents, age of participants...

The suggestion is to move Table 1 on Sample from Data collection to the beginning of results. Table 1 includes specific names of participating centers. I wonder about possible risks for confidentiality and maintenance of anonymity. The suggestion is to anonymize the centers. Please also specify how access was negotiated and also how consent was negotiated with participants and the relationship between participants and researchers.

Ethics: At Declarations section it is argued that "Since we investigated professionals only and this concerned an investigation of their experience with care delivery (no intervention to place) approval of the research ethics committee was not needed". Internationally this is difficult to sustain.

At Table 1, it is used "attention nurses palliative care"; it is not clear what you mean with this.

Data collection section should focus on how, when, by whom was the information collected. Reading the information to this regard it seems that a structured interview was conducted in which participants ranked each of the statements from 1 to 9; and then ask them to explain their ranking. Is all this done in 1 interview? Who conducts these interviews? Where are these conducted (ie: working place, home…)?

Figure 1 does not seem to add much, maybe it could be erased.

Analysis: It is clearly explained. Please add information on the cutting points to identify 2 points of views. It is not clear if any analysis was conducted to explore whether there are differences between professionals and volunteers (Later in results it is mentioned that both viewpoints are supported by professionals and volunteers).
Results

The suggestion is to add a phrase providing an overview of how many statements were ranked similarly, different and statistically significantly. This would facilitate having an idea of how different may be the perspectives.

The results provide two points of views of PCC: 1) Respondents believing that patients should be in charge of their own care and that professionals and volunteers should primarily support patients to achieve their goals and 2) Respondents considering it most important that patients, volunteers and professionals work together as a team with the patient in the passenger seat. It gets my attention that in group 2 it seems that they think as patients are not willing or capable to take decisions. This idea is worthy some discussion.

Besides, it mentions the similarities based on the 15 statements ranked similarly.

Please specify the statement number so that reader can easily find in Table 2. For example: care should be provided keeping patients' preferences in mind (3;+2*, 8;+2**)

Table 2, add below the table information about the scores (range and meaning)

It would be interesting to integrate results and discussion in one section. This integration will help to highlight key results and avoid some repetition.

The discussion section focuses on specific statement results and the importance of these. It would be interesting to discuss the results considering previous studies that provide an overview of health professionals' perspective of PCC. Is this different? In which aspects exactly? Why you think is different?. It is noteworthy to mention that as any self-reported results, what people say may be different from what they do. Future studies should consider some observation of behaviors and interactions considering the 8 domains of PCC.

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.

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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