Reviewer’s report

Title: Fostering patient-centredness by following patients outside the clinical setting: an interview study

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Reviewer: Claire Condron

Reviewer's report:

In this qualitative research study Canét-Wittkampf et al interview 12 students that had followed 4 different patients in out-of-hospital settings for two years beginning in the students' 3rd. year of medical school. Students were interview for their perspectives on patient centered learning and thematic analysis carried out.

Overall, the article is well written, and the aims are clear. The stated aim of this work was to understand how learning mechanisms, which potentially contribute to patient-centeredness, were triggered in medical students and to use this information to inform curriculum development.

The authors purport to use Scholl's model discuss and interpret their data, however there is little evidence of this in the manuscript. Scholl's model was used to inform the interview questions but no data is presented to determine the level of patient centeredness actually achieved by students in this longitudinal approach. What evidence is there that patient centeredness was acquired as a transferable skill, independent of the individual relationship built up with these particular patients? A comparison study with students who did not undergo this experience could yield some evidence of attitudinal shifting and demonstrate that this approach did in fact produce better patient centeredness.

The underlying triggers of learning seems to be the relationship which develops over time and fewer indications for learning were seen when students described their relationship with patients as less meaningful. The authors conclude that a longitudinal setting and non-medical role change the context in which students learn. This manuscript needs more in-depth discussion on the mechanisms required to build meaningful relationships with diverse patients. Methods to transfer these relationship-building skills to the setting of service provision remain largely unexplored and hence the impact of this work for curriculum development is limited. Developing a non-medical relationship "broadened perspectives", please consider methods to make this is a transferable skill.

Students got "emotionally involved" as a result of the close relationship, please consider the pro and cons of emotional involvement for clinical decision-making and the importance of emotional competence to effective CDM.

Reflection is identified as the significant trigger for learning and as such methods to encourage student reflection merits more consideration in the discussion.

The interactions consisted of scheduled visits twice a year at home, hospital or GP settings However no information given on the breakdown of home, vs GP or hospital settings thus the out of hospital context is confusing and need further explanation and metrics. It appears that the thematic analysis focuses on home interactions for relationship building.
The students adopted a companion role to the patient on their medical journey it would be interesting to know the patients' prospective of the companion role? Did the patient agree that they became an active participant in student learning?

I agree with the authors who identified the limitations of their study and would suggest that significant selection bias is introduced by the fact that only 12 students from 35 volunteered to complete the interviews. This needs to be mentioned in the manuscript.

Overall, the article is a well written piece of work that speaks to a topic of significant interest in the literature now and as such will be of interest to readers. However to achieve the stated aim the discussion needs to be better focused on methods to trigger learning and transferable skills for patient centeredness.

Minor points.

Page 8 Row 25 Should nursery read nursing

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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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