Reviewer’s report

Title: Illness and disease: an empirical-ethical viewpoint

Version: 0 Date: 18 May 2018

Reviewer: Bjorn Hofmann

Reviewer's report:

I am most thankful for the opportunity to review the new submission of this manuscript. The authors should be credited for their thoughtful engagement with the comments and suggestions. They have done a very good job.

When I am still somewhat critical to their manuscript it is because I still think that they could improve the work even further, and thereby make an ever more important contribution to the field. I can fully understand if the authors are exhausted by my comments, and the editor may argue that they are unnecessary. However, I hope that the authors are able to acknowledge my intentions of improving the impact of their work.

I think the authors have done a very good job in clarifying their conceptual framework. It has become much easier to distinguish the concepts of disease, illness, and sickness throughout the text. However, it seems to me that they still have some more work to do, e.g., when they write that "the article aims to further clarify the normative-ethical implications of patient perspectives on disease." Do they here refer to the patients' perspective on the professional perspective of human ailment, i.e., disease, or do they mean illness (which they describe a few sentences further down: "patients' actual understanding of illness." A bit further down: "The expectations patients have of certain treatments vary widely depending on the different views of their illness." They also write about "subjective views of illness." What I think makes it more challenging to the reader is that it is not quite clear when the authors write about the patient's illness experience and their reflection (or conception) of this experience, "patients' theories on disease," or their "subjective interpretations and explanatory models of illness." If the framework they suggest (or more precisely the research program) is to be of value, it appears to be important to be able to be clear and to differentiate about these issues.

It would also be helpful for the reader if it would be made more explicit and clear how the "medico-theoretical debates on disease, illness and sickness ... could profit from a better consideration of the actual subjective views of those people who are experienced with illness."

The authors' treatment of overdiagnosis is at best superficial. It is strongly recommended that they look into the phenomenon that H.G.Welch calls "the popularity paradox." It seems to undermine the effect they describe in the manuscript.
The level of precision can also be improved on the level of language (which is in general quite good). For example, when using terms such as "decisive factor" it is unclear to the reader whether this (the experienced burden of disease) is decisive or an important factor. Another term that appears unclear is "premature systematization."

The mention of the pharmaceutical industry in the conclusion may appear misinformed, as there is a wide collaboration between the industry and patient organizations, potentially strongly influencing illness experience (and demands). This does not mean that the authors have to engage in this complex issue, but only that it is important to choose their examples and statements carefully.

I am very sympathetic with the authors' attempt to (re)connect the moral imperative of medicine to patients' experience (of suffering). This is probably one of the reasons that I strongly encourage the authors to take another round to improve the manuscript. Much can be achieved by clarifying their concepts, increasing consistency and illustrating the implications. This will make their arguments more convincing, make the framework more applicable, and increase its impact.

**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.

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
Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

'I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal