Reviewer's report

Title: The mental health of nurses in acute teaching hospital settings: a cross-sectional survey

Version: 3 Date: 24 November 2014

Reviewer: Peter Nolan

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions
None

This is a most interesting study and one designed to explore an important aspect of nursing, namely the mental health of nurses themselves. The authors are a strong team, holding different posts with both clinical and academic orientations. The paper is well written, logical and succinct. It is highly relevant to and useful for the nursing workforce, as well as alerting healthcare managers to possible deficits in their organisations.

Discretionary Revisions
There are a few considerations that may assist readers if the authors were to address them:

1. The paper assumes that mental health problems in nursing staff have their origins in the workplace, whereas such problems may manifest in the workplace, but have their origins elsewhere. The authors may wish to discuss evidence relating to nurses' mental welfare prior to their entering the profession.

2. It would assist the reader if the differences between RNs and ENs were explained, and a discussion outlined regarding whether or not the nature of the work each group carries out affects their psychological functioning.

3. There is a danger in assuming that persons who misuse alcohol, have disordered eating and experience poor sleep have a mental health problem. Rather than identifying their problems, it may be more helpful to identify their coping strategies.

4. It may be preferable to allocate nursing personnel to teams and services on the basis of their personality traits, resilience and social skills as opposed to their clinical expertise and experience.

5. Finally, a brief discussion of what direction future research could take would be helpful to both nurses and academics.
Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.