Reviewer’s report

Title: New graduate nurses' experiences in a clinical specialty: A follow up study of newcomer perceptions of transitional support

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Reviewer: Panagiota Copanitsanou

Reviewer’s report:

This is a study about an important issue. I believe all clinical nurses will remember/identify similar problems like stress, emotional exhaustion, increased workload and responsibility, fear of failure, etc. in the beginning of their practice. Transitional programs can be very useful and we certainly need to know more about how we can support nurses in a better way during this difficult period. However, I must add that in many countries there are no such programs and the newly graduate nurses are forced into work as soon as they are hired in order to meet the increased needs, many times without any support...

Here follows a list of suggestion to the authors:

In the abstract, the authors do not give adequate information about their methods: in which country did the study take place? What was the response rate? How many times were the nurses surveyed during this one year? What were the names of the questionnaires? Which statistical tests did they use? What about ethical issues?

Also, the abstract is confusing regarding the study design: first the authors say that the nurses were "surveyed" but then in the results they say about "emergent themes". Was this a mixed methods study? All this information needs to be in the abstract in order to gain the reader's attention.

In the results of the abstract, I think it would be appropriate to add the nurses' mean age.

The term "medical officer" is used in Australia for doctors?

Perhaps it would be better if the last paragraph of the background section would be organized in research questions. This way it would be easier for the reader to understand (now it's a 5-line long sentence).

In the methods, the authors must add whether the nurses who participated in the present study were the same (and in number) to the ones who provided the quantitative and qualitative findings of the baseline survey. Also, the word "qualitative" is confusing. The nurses' sample (n=140) is too big for a qualitative analysis (even if not all nurses provide written comments)- please explain more on this…
Also in the methods, it is not clear whether nurses answered the questionnaires independently or with the help of the researcher/ as an interview.

Were all nurses females?

The results under the heading "Experiences over time: Baseline vs follow up" are the results in the MCSS and PES-AUS questionnaires? This is not clear.

In the data analysis, the authors say that "Data integration was achieved by transforming ('quantitizing') the qualitative data into numerical form", but in the results they talk about subthemes… how were these subthemes generated? Who and how performed such an analysis? According to what qualitative method? What was the rationale for this? Also, although a qualitative analysis is best in exploring the participants' experiences, the authors do not mention such thing in the text (therefore not preparing the reader for a qualitative analysis). If another researcher is looking for a qualitative study for this subject, she/he will not find this study (qualitative design is not mentioned either to the title or to the key words). In my opinion all results about qualitative analysis must be deleted and the authors must keep in analyzing only the quantitative results. Or, they can adjust/ edit the text in order to include the qualitative analysis (which must be clear and evident and given in detail).

The results presented in the abstract are not mentioned in the main text's results!

So, were the "integrated findings" of statistical significance? And, more importantly, is this "integration" the right term? I do not know if this "integration" is something scientifically acceptable—the authors must discuss about this in the methods, and provide the appropriate references).

In the same section, please correct the last part of this phrase (it cannot stand alone as a sentence): "For example, as shown in Table 1, when new graduates were asked about their satisfaction with support … less negative at follow-up. Baseline total: -20 versus Follow-up total: -14." The statistical significances must appear in the Table also.

In the discussion, the authors say that "Although it was anticipated that new graduate nurses' satisfaction with their transitional support program would increase over time, this WAS NOT reflected in their MCSS or PES-AUS scores… however, new graduates made more positive responses to the open-ended questions at follow-up than baseline, suggesting that overall new graduate nurses were more satisfied at the completion of their TSP". This "suggestion" about increased satisfaction cannot be derived from the above, the findings are contradictory (we cannot say that a finding is "more powerful" than the other).

Usually the Discussion of an article is not organized under headings/ subheadings.

Provide the full names for ICU / PICU / CCU, although it is clear what you mean.

The phrase "self-report measures are prone to social desirability bias" needs a reference.
In the conclusions, the authors say that "This study has shown that while transitional support programs are helpful in supporting new graduate nurses in their first year of practice, there are unmet…" -- they should add that this was only in qualitative results. Also, the results about support are not discussed in the discussion.

**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.

Yes

**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.

I am able to assess the statistics

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