Reviewer’s report

Title: What establishes an excellent nurse? A focus group and Delphi Panel approach

Version: 0 Date: 27 Nov 2016

Reviewer: Virginia Plummer

Reviewer's report:

Overall this was an interesting approach to an interesting question.

Background-This section is the weakest section of the paper. What is an excellence nurse? I don’t see this term in the literature. Is it based on what the nurse wants for them-self and the patient and family? The paper seems to be silent on these important stakeholders’ perspectives.

The literature referenced throughout is somewhat dated and needs updating and the first reference is the homepage for the Ministry of Health. Need to add which Ministry and 'on the internet' is inadequate.

Background - Line 21- What is confronting about nursing diagnoses and an increased level of knowledge. And Line 26- Is there any role for evidence based practice and patient centred care for a proficient nurse?

Line 45- Why would only Honours students have excellence development? Line 48- Are only Honours students 'inspired'? And Line 50- What does the term very multidisciplinary mean? What does the term excellence development mean?

Line 53 - Do only Honours programs have expert lecturers?

Second page of Background- line 11 the authors say that the term excellent nurse has not been distinctly specified in the literature -yet there is reference to at least 5 papers by the authors themselves (Diers, Benner, Zhang, Mieg, Spers).

Methods- It is difficult to understand the purpose of hospital and mental health care sample selection to create sample heterogeneity for the focus groups Line 11 under 'Purpose' and then to split them into 2 groups and create homogeneity line 12 under 'Sample and recruitment’ . How does this fit with the statement about encouraging diversity of opinions? Line 22.
The paragraph beginning 'Six focus groups' under 'Sample and Recruitment' where the composition of the groups is described is most unclear- perhaps a Table would help?

Data analysis second page - ATLAS Line 26, should appear in the reference list

The expert panel in the Delphi study involved those from a range of backgrounds including publishers, and others not involved in nursing practice. Please comment on why an expert panel from the 'real world' was not invited?

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.

Yes

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?
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Acceptable
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