Author’s response to reviews

Title: Advanced Nurse Practitioners in municipal healthcare as a way to meet the growing healthcare needs of the frail elderly: A qualitative interview study with managers, doctors and specialist nurses

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Dear Editor,

Please find attached the revised version of manuscript NURS-D-17-002125. Based on reviewers’ suggestion, we have revised the manuscript. We would like to thank the reviewers for the very helpful review and we hope that this revised manuscript will meet approval. Below follows an account of the responses made and changes done to the manuscript. We have coloured all changes done. Please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Kind regards,

Katarina Sjögren Forss
Reviewer 1:

- Abstract results, suggest replace the word 'dare to take' with 'consider taking'. Revisit sentence structure and grammar Sentence 1 of Conclusion.

Response: We have replaced the word “dare to take” with “consider taking” and have also re-written the conclusion: “Advanced Nurse Practitioner is considered to be a valuable resource not only for the frail elderly but also for the nurses in the municipal healthcare and for the doctors in primary care as they probably would make healthcare more effective. They might be a way to meet the increasing healthcare needs of frail elderly, however there are also challenges to overcome before they can become a reality in a Swedish healthcare context. Consequently, this role deserves further investigation”.

- Background, need a reference for statement line 10 p 2 ending in 'this vulnerable group.'

Response: Line 7-14 on page 2 (The shortage of doctors in primary care affects the continuity of care as well as the availability of healthcare for this vulnerable group. It also affects the nurses who work in municipal healthcare, as they find it difficult to make consultations with the doctors’ due this shortage) refers to references 1 and 2 as stated on line 14.

- Line 57 p2 replace usually been the responsibility, with 'has historically been the responsibility'.......

Response: We have corrected this as requested.

- Line 4 p3, what are ECTs? Explain the next two lines more clearly also.

Response: We have re-written and tried to explain it more clear: “A Swedish registered nurse holds a Bachelor’s degree with 180 education credit. In Sweden, a national credit system is used by the universities to show the scope of a course or a study program. One week’s full-time study (40 hours) corresponds to 1.5 higher education credit. One (1) Swedish credit is equal to one (1) ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credit. After having a Bachelor’s degree, a specialist nurse must have completed 60–75 education credits on advanced level and have a 1-year Master’s degree [22]”.

- Line 61 p3 ......'needs for nursing care'..

Response: We have corrected this as requested.
Results - Role of ANP to satisfy the frail elderly needs, across the two quotes are 4 important points which need highlighting, quality, safety, care continuity and person centredness. Response: On page 6 (The role of ANP from the perspective to satisfy the frail elderly’s need of healthcare) we have added and re-written: “The participants, especially the nurses, thought the role of ANPs would increase patient safety as the ANP would have the ability to put together several parts of a complex patient picture through their clinical competence, leadership and collaborative practice. The continuity of care was also considered to enhance as the ANP could follow the frail elderly through different types of services and take more responsibility for the patients regarding both nursing and medical care. The nurses stated that an increased patient safety through better continuity would mean a more personalised and person-centred care as the ANP would have in-depth knowledge of the elderly as individuals, not only as patients. The nurses also thought that the ANP would have more time to focus each patients’ situation as a whole that together with the ANPs advanced skills in knowing, doing and being the quality, safety, continuity and person centredness would improve”.

line 44p 6 is ordinating coordinating or ordering?
Response: It is supposed to be “ordering” – we have corrected this.

Discussion - discussion on doctors and managers’ views is based on very little data, 3 quotes from 4 doctors, and 4 quotes from 6 managers, more evidence is needed to support the arguments.
Response: We are well aware that the sample is fairly small and on page 13 we have added: “According to the small sample, generalisations must be done with caution”. However, the doctors’ and managers’ views are based on more than the quotes presented, it is based on the findings from the whole analysis. By using quotes, we can demonstrate how the findings and our interpretations have arisen from the data.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 on page 11 should be revised for flow, sentence structure and readability. Response: We have re-written those paragraphs.

Limitations, write in the past tense, remove discussion on transferability for this method Response: We have removed the discussion on transferability and have re-written the limitations in the past tense.
Reviewer 2:

- To my opinion, there is also international relevance in this study that is not properly discussed.

Response: We agree with the reviewer and on page 3, we have added following to get a more international perspective: “The numbers of frail elderly are set to increase, both in Sweden as well as in the rest of the world. According to the World Health Organization, the global population of elderly people aged 60 years or more was 600 million in 2000; it is expected to rise to around 2 billion by 2050 [28]. Indeed, a quarter to a half of people older than 85 years are estimated to be frail [29]. From a Swedish perspective, where the number of people who are aged 80 or older is expected to rise from about 500 000 in 2014 to 800 000 in 2030 [30], one must explore any opportunity to meet their growing healthcare needs [31]”.

- In Introduction the authors mention the existence of ANPs educated in Linköping and Skövde. It seems that some of them work in primary care. Were any of them interviewed?

Response: No, none of the nurses interviewed had an education as ANP.

And even more important, did any of the interview subjects have collaboration or contact with the ANPs.

Response: None of the participants had a collaboration or contact with the ANPs.

Are any of the ANPs employed in the areas where the interview subjects are working? If yes, it would be very interesting to mention that and also present any differences between the subjects that have been "exposed" to the ANP role and those that have not.

Response: No, none of the ANPs are employed in the areas where the participants of this study is working.

- It would be also very interesting to present demographic information regarding the municipalities and the areas in which the interview subjects are practicing, as this might be affecting their attitude towards the ANP role.

Response: On page 4 we have added: “This study was conducted during winter 2016 in a municipality, defined as a suburban region, with about 50 000 inhabitants located in the southern part of Sweden. A relatively large proportion of the inhabitants live on the countryside and the main town of the municipality has about 18 000 inhabitants”.
- The publication of the English translation of the interview guide can also be interesting for better understanding the results of the study.

Response: On page 5, “Data collection” we describe the questions used. Therefore, we did not add the interview guide as we do not think it would bring more information to the readers.