Reviewer’s report

Title: Revitalizing physical assessment in undergraduate nursing education - what skills are important to learn, and how are these skills applied during clinical rotation? A cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 29 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Carol Windsor

Reviewer's report:

Thank you to the authors who have made significant changes to the article. I have a few comments as follows.

The Background generally looks good. But the sentences from Line 21 on in the first paragraph do not obviously reflect the intent or outcomes of the research. I do think that the research was about determining what patient assessment skills were used by student nurses, to what extent over three years and what are some barriers and facilitators to the use of those skills. I wondered also why the comments about biosciences appear at the start and in the conclusion. The link between the research and biosciences is obvious but in relation to this work is not clear.

Just to note that Douglas et al. do not argue that the range of assessment skills should be reduced (stated in a couple of places) because they are not used. On the contrary, the argument is that we need to understand the practice context and change that context so that student nurses and RNs are able to apply the appropriate skills and then there may be stronger grounds for teaching less assessment skills - maybe not.

I wonder if the words 'train/training' and 'task' fit with the intent of the research? Would it be better to state that nurses develop skills in patient assessment or are educated in the application and interpretation of patient assessment skills or apply B-PAS (rather than train). Task and training do not sit well with critical thinking/interpretation.
On page 6, starting line 10, is a description of survey question on barriers and facilitators and six choices of answers. The options here raise the issue I note above about the research purpose. They read as quite narrow options that have much more to do with 'instruction' rather than barriers and facilitators. I wonder how this question was constructed and based on what assumptions? And the results from this question are not hugely helpful.

It was noted by both reviewers that focus group data analysis is not explained nor justified. How do data excerpts become 'important'? And do 'themes' emerge - or do researchers interpret? There needs to be more here.

Page 8, from line 18 - this is a repeat of information on pp5-6 - could be in either place.

The section on analysis of qual data reads well - (although would be even better if tested out against literature - but not for this article!). Given the big difference between quantitative and qualitative sample sizes perhaps more critical interpretation of the statistical outcomes would be appropriate. Or maybe the survey needed to do a bit more.

Again - a number of edits to be addressed throughout and more than I would want to list here.
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?
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Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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