Reviewer’s report

Title: "How do we use the time?" – an observational study measuring the task time distribution of nurses in psychiatric care

Version: 2 Date: 29 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Mick McKeown

Reviewer's report:

I enjoyed reading this paper which addresses the important issue of mental health nursing time spent upon different aspects of job role, with low levels of direct patient care time highlighted.

I do not think I was one of the original reviewers of this paper, so I am conscious of the potential unfairness of requesting new revisions at a late stage of the review/submission process. The paper is a coherent presentation of a competently undertaken study, with findings that ring true and appropriate discussion of these. Therefore, I offer my feedback in the spirit of helping to further strengthen the paper, and leave any further revision to the discretion of the authors.

1. It seems to me that the balance between direct patient care time and time spent upon other tasks, including ward-focused/administrative or medication related tasks might reflect various trends in mental health care e.g. a denuding of staffing levels (with associated international concerns regarding safe staffing) and the consolidation of a bio-medical orthodoxy (hence relative preponderance of medication tasks). Perhaps either are worth mentioning briefly.

2. An emphasis upon 'paperwork/administration' tasks may be associated with risk aversion/risk society dimensions of the role of psychiatry within broader societal governance. Interestingly, there may be a tendency because of this for the more senior staff to be pulled into these governance tasks, and hence away from direct patient care; a finding noted in the papers below.

A study I was personally involved in addressed such concerns in the distribution of staff time on wards, discussed in the following papers that may be of interest; the latter of which comprising ethnographic observations that appear to complement the time-motion findings in this paper.


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?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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