Author's response to reviews

Title: Endurance, resistance and resilience in the South African health care system: case studies to demonstrate mechanisms of coping within a challenging system

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editors

We would like to thank the two reviewers for their careful and extremely helpful reading of our paper. We submit a revised version. We use this letter to address all comments put to us.

With respect to reviewer 1, we have corrected the minor matters by clearer referencing and some removal of text. ‘Incredible’ has been removed.

On Dr Pfeiffer’s requests for major revisions, we have in part through using her work clarified the meaning of resources and assets. With respect to methods, we have more fully described the field-workers. On results, we have emphasized more the role of resources. With respect to Thulani, we recognize the comment’s validity but disagree. We have amended text and sub-title to reflect what we believe is the case – resistance may be deadly but not futile. We have noted the study’s limitations.

With respect to reviewer 2, we have addressed the format of the paper to be in keeping with journal style. Through additional commentary, we have linked the sections to one another more explicitly.

Dr Leon is correct about the title. We have changed transforming to challenging. There was intense debate among the authors about this with the South Africans considering ‘dysfunctional’ is too negative and sweeping. We hope the compromise is acceptable. The title also suggested a comparison. We do not make those so we have altered that part of the title to be more in keeping with its content.

Reviewer 2 is quite critical of the nature of the very long background section. She is right. We have reduced this section considerably, removing many associated but perhaps only partly relevant references. We have rewritten this section to set up the paper contextually and theoretically.

Removing references and tightening up the argument to address our aims does
we hope reduce its commentary nature and allows our voices to speak more clearly. We have added a distinctive purpose to the discussion in using other respondent voices and the theoretical lenses to highlight our contributions in this study. We have also commented in the findings on the relationships between the cases and the background ideas.

As highlighted for reviewer 1, we have added practical detail to the methods section in relation to recruitment, sample, data collection and analysis. We hope that we have provided sufficient detail.

On case study and narrative, we have reduced our arguments, seeing case study as the data collection method with data analyses providing the bases of narratives. We feel it is important to reference this section in detail.

With respect to conceptual framework, we have tried to make things clearer by removing analytic framework ideas and grouping the concepts of coping (endurance, resilience, resistance) and agency as a summary of our approach.

On findings, we have added interpretive pieces and sub-titles to each case to show what elements of coping, agency, context and resources they demonstrate.

Again, we thank the reviewers and hope in this letter and redraft we have answered their concerns. We look forward to your responses and are of course happy to consider other changes if the new document lacks clarity.

Best wishes
The Authors