Reviewer’s report

Title: A qualitative exploration of the discharge process and factors predisposing to readmissions to the intensive care unit

Version: 1 Date: 17 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Marcelline Harris

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and very well written paper. The authors note that clinical decision tools have failed to reduce rates of readmission to ICUs from general care units. In this study, investigators ‘step back’ and qualitatively explore, from the perspective of physicians and nurses, factors that contribute to readmissions to ICUs.

Overall, the findings are plausible, and resonate with common experiences. The implications are clearly stated, and follow from the reported findings. There are a few minor revisions needed that would strengthen the paper.

* The description of procedures used in data analysis is somewhat incomplete. Specifically, the authors indicate that the 'broad categories' that were constructed during the transcript review were 'systematically reviewed to establish core concepts and themes. After broad themes were identified, all interviews were reviewed again for the presence of each theme and to further characterize the range of responses within each team'. Who reviewed the interviews, and what defined a team? This is not described.

* It is not clear why some quotes are classified as a specific theme within a specific category. For example, category 2 (process factors), theme: transitions of care, 2nd quote. It is not clear why this couldn't have been categorized as an organizational factor, and theme of resource constraints. Authors should provide some explanation of the attributes/characteristics of each category and theme within the category that guided their decision making.

* Table 1 suggests there are interesting differences between physicians and nurses on several factors. This is not discussed in the paper, and related to the first bullet it is not clear that any nurses were involved in reviewing the responses prior to final assignment to categories and themes. Subsequently, it is not clear if these differences reflect true differences in the perspectives, or potentially reflect the filter of the physician authors of the paper.

Again, this is an interesting paper, well written, and the recommendations above are 'minor' not major with respect to recommended revisions.
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?
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?
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No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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