Reviewer’s report

Title: Determinants of the quality of care relationships in long-term care: A participatory study

Version: 0 Date: 07 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Annemiek Stoopendaal

Reviewer’s report:

Dear authors,

The aim of your study is to explore and compare the determinants of the quality of care relationships in three client groups in long-term care. You provided a qualitative participatory study in which clients were involved as co-researchers.

You have clearly described the methods used, yet you could clarify more why you choose to use participatory research?

In line 191 you described the use of sensitizing concepts. Yet, in your description it seems to me that you mean inductive codes?

You describe a care relationship as a multidimensional construct, your aim is to discover generic dimensions of the care relationship. You call these dimensions determinants. Please make clear why you choose to use the concept 'determinants' and what is your definition of a determinant?

What is the goal of this study? Was the choice for determinant based on the idea to find opportunities to study the healthcare relationship in a quantitative way?

My problem with the word determinant is that it is quite static and it seems to cover the complexity of the care relationship in which multiple dilemma's appear, for example when a patient that has a memory problem wants to be free to leave the care organization. The values freedom and safety often clash in healthcare. Sometimes good care means a restriction of freedom. Could you show more of this complexity in the findings or at least in the discussion?

What I miss is a clear research question. And what were the questions the respondents had to answer? Was the focus only on the determination of 'good care'? Asking for help is suggested as the right thing to do for the client, but what happens when a client asks too much help? The way the questions are posed influences the answers, so please describe the research process at this point more precise and critical.

My biggest problem is in the results. The determinants could be broken down into four levels: client, professional, between a client and professional, and contextual. This leveling of determinants is not clear to me, especially I have my concerns about the level of the client. You should emphasize the mutuality of the care relationship more and better, this will also show the complexity of care.
The overview of determinants in Table 2 starts with asking for help and giving feedback, these are other kinds of determinants than empathy and trustworthy. Please consider to use the same kinds of concepts: only verbs or only nouns.

Last remarks:

The work of Joanne Tronto could be helpful in discussing the results. She describes care in 4 phases. These phases can be useful in rethinking the care relationship more deeply and critically.

Your idea of a care relationship is described only from a psychological perspective. But a care relationship is also physical and professional/medical. What if a professional listens carefully but has not enough professional expertise to offer a right medical treatment? What if a care doesn't use the 'skilled vision' enough, makes no objective observations but only listens to the patient? What if the relationship is very nice but the patient dies from the wrong professional treatment? Could you please emphasize and criticize your work from a more profound understanding of what care is about?

I wish you good luck in rewriting this interesting 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

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