Reviewer’s report

Title: Patients’ experience of communication and handling of symptomatic adverse events in breast cancer patients receiving adjuvant chemotherapy

Version: 0 Date: 26 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Katherine Cowan

Reviewer's report:

I thought this was an interesting and succinct article with a clear structure and explicit purpose. I am not qualified to comment on the clinical components of the research or the findings, but I do have comments on the patient involvement aspects of the paper. Overall, particularly given the focus of this journal, I was really surprised to find so little emphasis on the patient involvement aspect of the research. My specific comments and observations are as follows:

You describe the questionnaire being developed "in co-operation" with patients - this seems an odd choice of word to me. Would "in partnership" not more accurately reflect the role and nature of patient involvement?

How did you decide how you were going to involve patient representatives? Were there limitations to what you were able to do, and how did you manage those?

There is no information about the patient representatives. I was interested to know who they were (women with breast cancer?), where you found them, how you selected them and what their make-up/background was. I think it would reinforce the credibility of your method for patient involvement to be transparent about the practicalities - it's also an opportunity for other researchers to learn from you.

I wanted to know more about how you managed the group of patient representatives and how you supported them. Did the group ever meet in person? How did you ensure that they were adequately briefed to carry out the task?

My understanding is that the patients' input to the questionnaire design was through an online forum. How did this work in practice? How did you set it up? This seems like it could be a good example of a cost-effective and potentially efficient way of doing patient involvement, so more information and your reflections on how it worked (pros and cons) would be really useful.

If I've understood correctly, only just over half of the patient reps who you recruited actually got involved in developing the questionnaire. I think it would be useful to understand why. Did you get any feedback from them? With hindsight, is there anything you could or should have done differently? Again, this would be useful material for all of us working in the field of patient and public involvement.

Page 11 line 19 ("The questions raised...") - I didn't understand this sentence.
You mention that the involvement of patients "has created a more holistic approach" - how do you know this? I think it's important to explain in practical terms what difference your patient involvement activity made and why. If this is something you are interested in expanding on, I think it would be appropriate to include that in the conclusion.

In conclusion, I think to provide some more practical detail and reflections on how you involved patients in the questionnaire design would really enhance the value of this paper within this journal.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal