Reviewer’s report

Title: Living life precariously with rheumatoid arthritis - A mega-ethnography of nine qualitative evidence syntheses

Version: 0 Date: 17 Jul 2018

Reviewer: Toby Smith

Reviewer's report:

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Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to review this paper. This is an excellent piece of work and the authors should be commended on the size and scale of this work. I feel that clinically this paper has considerable value to better understand the lived experiences of people with RA. It also highlights potential research wastage which is important for researchers and clinical academic when planning research prioritise. Fundamentally, this is an important paper. My comments below are overall thoughts and suggested changes which the authors may wish to address if provided with the opportunity to revise their paper prior to acceptance.

Abstract - accurate representation of the work. I am not a 'big fan' of the Toye et al name dropping in the Abstract methods and would suggest this is revised to actually say what this is i.e. mega-ethnography.

Introduction - short but to the point. Nothing to add.

Methods - I think there was a referencing error for QES [58-60] as this is out of order with the other reference numbers.

Methods - Can you clarify whether this paper was a stand-alone project or part of the larger chronic pain mega-ethnography? Have these data been presented in the previous work (Reference 5) or is this new and novel. Clarification would be great. Acknowledging the systematic review protocol number may also alley these points as well.

Methods - the November 2017 search is over 6 months old now. I think this is just about acceptable for this study but if the review process is prolonged, the authors may consider updating their search to include papers over the last 12 months.
Methods - As per PRISMA reporting guidelines, could the search strategy be presented as a Table with the strategy presented just as was provided one of the databases. This may make interpretation a little easier.

Methods - was there any verification from a second person for the screening of included studies? It would appear that this was only performed by FT? Was this a limitation?

Methods - for data extraction, were two reviewers were used, please provide their initials so it is clear who actually did this work.

Methods - "Once we had agreed upon a description of each QES finding, xx rewrote this finding in the first person" - is xx an error?

Methods - I was expecting some form of appraisal tool to provide a guide to the quality of evidence presented. I think this is essential otherwise the reader is none-the-wiser on how to interpret these findings against the methodological quality. I know that this was discussed in the Discussion section (Paragraph 4) but I don't think the argument for not doing this is currently sufficiently strong.

Findings - please be consist with abbreviations - RA is sometime rheumatoid arthritis and sometimes RA throughout the paper - please keep to RA for consistency.

Findings - these were presented clearly and articulate the themes which were generated. There was limited information on how this was consistent or varied across difference populations or countries of origin or clinical backgrounds which may provide important granular information. There is also limited information to interpret how consistent or exceptional these messages were across the 9 QES? This is important information to be able to assess transferability of the findings to clinical practice. These steps are not really covered between the presentation of the findings and the description of the data synthesis in the Methods section. I think this could be a little clearer to the reader.

Discussion and Conclusions - accurate representation of the results and clearly presented. Nothing to add. Well done.

Figures - I really found Figure 1 helpful. Thank you.

**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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