

Qualitative Research

– Critical Appraisal with YOHLNET , September 2021

Barriers to accurate diagnosis and effective management of heart failure in primary care : a qualitative study.

Paper Ahmet Fuat : Barriers to accurate diagnosis of heart failure in primary care

1) Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Yes – they were attempting to find out what the main barriers were to accurate diagnosis of heart failure in primary care.

2) Is the qualitative method appropriate?

Yes they were trying to identify where the problems lay in diagnosis and management in primary care. The subjective views (in quotes) identified the problems.

3) Sampling Strategy

From where was the sample selected and why?

North East of England, GPs focus group. 41 were chosen to be invited and 30 attended. The group was a broad representation of GPs in the area although a high proportion were male (higher than the average in the population)

4) How were they selected and why?

Stratified by age, sex, ethnic group, geographical distribution, employment status (full/part-time)

Stratification.

Usually in a study there is a mention of stratification. E.g. if you were doing a randomised controlled trial you might want to stratify if there are social issues. Rather than compare for example 1 GP practice against another, you will stratify to ensure that the patients are comparable. You stratify to ensure that an equal number of **patients** from each social background are included

Was the sample size justified?

It would have been useful to know why 41 GPs were picked – was this a magic number or did they attempt to get all practices included?.

Is it clear why some participants chose not to take part?

No – we know 11 did not attend the focus group, but we don't know why. Presumably it was not possible because of other issues, but it would have been useful to know the reasons.

5) Data Collection

Is it clear:

a) Where the setting of the data collection was, and why that setting was chosen?

The setting was unclear although it does appear that they were interviewed as 4 groups of 6-8 members.

b) How was the data collected and why?

Focus group. There was a list of points to be considered rather than a structured interview.

c) How was the data recorded and why?

Audiotaped, transcribed and corrected

d) If the methods were modified during the process and why?

6) Data Analysis

a) Is it clear how the analysis was done?

Yes – they used the theory of pragmatic variant grounded theory. Transcripts were read and broad themes were identified as the groups progressed.

Helen's comment about deviant cases shows they analysed cases potentially different to those identified in the literature search.

Were steps taken to test the credibility of the findings?

Yes – they sent all 30 participants a report summarising the study results and conclusions. Most strongly agreed that this represented their views.

d) Are you confident that all data were taken into account?

Seems to be – they identified common themes and felt that by the time they got to the 4th group, the same themes kept reappearing (Saturation)

7) Research partnership relations

Is it clear:

a) If the researchers critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence?

Yes There was multiple coding and the bias of the principal investigator was minimised by using a co-moderator in three groups

7) Findings

Is there a clear statement of the findings?

Yes – there are three categories of barrier

Uncertainties about clinical practice – there was a lack of confidence in diagnosing heart failure – problems with the diagnostic process, availability of Echo and treatment issues. Only 37% of GPs have direct access to Echo.

8) Justification of data interpretation

Is it clear:

a) Whether there is sufficient data present to support their finding – yes – when they were extracting data from the focus groups, they started to get to saturation point for new issues.

b) How the researchers selected the data presented in the paper from the original sample.

Seems OK but it is not clear why they chose certain quotes

9 Transferability

Are the findings of this study transferable to a wider population – Yes

10 relevance and usefulness

Is the research important and relevant:

a) In terms of addressing the research aim.

Yes – they have identified the barriers

b) In terms of contributing something new to understanding – yes although it would have been useful to have known what was in the literature search that was done.

John Blenkinsopp
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