



INTERNATIONAL HEALTH & SOCIAL MANAGEMENT - 2016

evaluation of the master thesis.

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EVALUATION OF THE MASTER THESIS

Master thesis title:	The cost and impact of patient-centered care. A Comparison of Hospital Managers' Perceptions towards Patient-Centered Care under the Evaluation of Financial and Performance Pressures		
Examinee:	Melanie Hartl, BSc	Student ID number:	1610360007
Supervisor:	Barrie Dowdeswell	Overall Grade:	Excellent

SCORES – OVERALL GRADING SCALE:

100 – 90	excellent (1)
89 – 80	good (2)
79 – 70	satisfactory (3)
69 – 60	sufficient (4)
59 – 0	insufficient (5)

City, Date:Corbridge, UK, 19 July 2018.....

Signature:Barrie Dowdeswell.....
Barrie Dowdeswell

EVALUATION CRITERIA	REMARKS	POINTS (0-100)	FACTOR OF WEIGHTING	POINTS X WEIGHTING
Quality regarding content				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific foundation Quality of used references; adequacy of literature review Practical relevance Summary and reflection Individual contribution and independence in development of thesis 		90	0,5	45
Structural quality				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure and outline (clear, logical, comprehensible) Congruency of objective, layout and argumentation Approach to problem solving (process, applied method) Linkage of theory and practice 		91	0,3	27
Formal quality				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent is consistent with specifications Correct and complete mode of citation Style and language Overall impression 		91	0,2	18
FINAL GRADE			1,0	90

OVERALL EVALUATION

Melanie has chosen for her study an issue that seems deceptively simple and axiomatic in healthcare, *patient focused care*, but which on examination reveals conflicts between policy and practice and rhetoric and reality. The term *patient focused care*, in all its guises, is often annexed by policy makers and managers as a shorthand expression to advocate service change or restate quality standards in the face of fiscal or service pressures. In this respect Melanie questions whether this is justified by examining the different perspectives as between those directing (top down) service strategy and those delivering front line services. All too often the term is misused and misconstrued, for example its prosaic inclusion in mission statements. She also considers whether the principles of *patient focused care* can be regarded as a critical success factor in aligning the interests and values as between all parts of an organization and its relationships with its patients and local communities. Melanie, during her internship at Northumbria NHS Trust, experienced first hand the deep cultural significance of patient focused care and how this is being challenged by contemporary pressures within health systems across Europe: it could not be more topical.

The scientific foundation for the study is well thought through and thorough. Secondary research is comprehensive and relevant and Melanie has shown good insight in cutting through the avalanche of material available to produce a well balanced and well informed presentation of the different definitions and typologies of *patient focused care* and its role in policy development, shaping values and organizational and workforce cultures and impacting on outcomes. Her referencing is excellent in choice and nature.

This created a strong foundation for her primary research. Her methodology is sound and she has rightly focused on a primarily qualitative approach given the predominately subjective nature of the topic at personal and professional level. Nevertheless, she has also shown a good understanding of scientific research principles and has used this to justify her principal approach and explain the limitations of a quantitative methodology. In this latter respect there is little comparable and contemporary evidence available and even then there are simply too many variables (as between sites) to draw reliable conclusions.

The presentation of results is informative, well focused and well balanced given that it would be easy to show a natural humanitarian bias. Its veracity is unquestionable. This plays through to her analysis and discussion that flows seamlessly from the results.

The discussion demonstrates mastery of what is clearly a complex topic that belies its seemingly simplistic message. She clearly demonstrates the links between her secondary and primary research. She shows how the local health systems environment can shape the interpretation and application of patient focused. She also demonstrates the often hidden tensions that can build up when rhetoric and reality collide within organisations. She contrasts this with the transformative beneficial impact of deep rooted alignment between values and cultures brought about by sensitive adoption of the *principle of patient focused care* and ultimately how this plays through to improved outcomes and a sense of partnership between care providers and their local communities. She also illustrates how an effective patient focused care ethos can contribute to a high quality sustainable future despite rising pressures. Melanie has additionally rightly identified the principle of responsible autonomy as proving one of the important cornerstones for successful adoption of systems wide *patient focused care*. In my own experience this is all too often overlooked and it is to her credit that she has drawn this conclusion. This adds value to the study and helps reinforce its plausibility.

The conclusions are well presented and justified by the evidence she presents and there are clear and unambiguous recommendations that all healthcare organisations would find timely and helpful.

At all times Melanie showed her individualism and self-starter capability in this study. She was timely in her identification of study sites, established good relationships with participants, with perhaps the only disappointment being the smaller number of respondents than anticipated from Northumbria. This was in large part due to a new management team bedding in and also being preoccupied by the insistence of the NHS department of health that all NHS organisations should participate in the celebration of the 70th birthday of the NHS. This occurred at the critical time in the study. However, in my view this is not a problem, does not devalue the study and in any event was more than (justifiably) offset by Melanie's personal experience during her two month internship at Northumbria during which she worked on different dimensions of their *patient focused care* strategy.

In my view this is a strong, well-rounded and insightful study worthy of a grading of *excellent*.
