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| **Number and Item** | **Guide questions / descriptions** | **Response** |
| **Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity** |
| Personal characteristics |
| 1. Interviewer / facilitator | Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group? | CT West conducted interviews |
| 2. Credentials | What were the researcher's credentials? E.g. PhD, MD | MBBS BSc MRCS (England) |
| 3. Occupation | What was their occupation at the time of the study? | Colorectal Research Fellow |
| 4. Gender | Was the researcher male or female? | Male |
| 5. Experience and training | What experience or training did the researcher have? | Completed University of East Anglia Qualitative Research Training Series  |
| Relationship with participants |  |  |
| Relationship established | Was a relationship established prior to study commencement? | Two participants were on the consensus study steering committee and had met the researcher face-to-face prior to the online focus group meetings |
| Participant knowledge of the interviewer | What did the participants know about the researcher? e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research | Participants were given an information sheet to read before consenting to the study. They were aware that they would be discussing experiences of the empty pelvis syndrome following surgery, and that patients with similar experiences would be with them in the meetings |
| Interviewer characteristics | What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic | The interviewer had an insider status on the research question with the potential to bias both questioning and analysis, this is acknowledged in the limitations |
| **Domain 2: Study design** |  |  |
| Theoretical framework |  |  |
| 9. Methodological orientation and theory | What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? e.g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis | Interpretative phenomenological analysis |
| Participant selection |  |  |
| 10. Sampling | How were participants selected? e.g. purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball | Convenience sample  |
| 11. Method of approach | How were participants approached? e.g. face-to-face, telephone, mail, email | Approached with emails from PelvEx Collaborators with support from Bowel Research UK  |
| 12. Sample size | How many participants were in the study? | 12 participants, however no upper limit on sample size was set |
| 13. Non-participation | How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons? | It is unknown how many potential participants saw adverts or were approached to participate in the wider consensus study.There were 25 patients recruited in the consensus study, all of which were invited to take part focus group meetings. The 13 that did not take part did not give a reason for this. |
| Setting |
| 14. Setting of data collection | Where was the data collected? e.g. home, clinic, workplace | Participants were at home during the virtual focus group meetings |
| 15. Presence of non-participants | Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers? | A patient and public involvement professional (SA Rose) was present from Bowel Research UK People and Researchers Together networkFor focus groups conducted principally in Dutch an appropriate medical translator was present (A Denys)One patient had a family member accompanying them in the virtual focus group meeting |
| 16. Description of sample | What are the important characteristics of the sample? e.g. demographic data, date | These are stated in the results – age, gender, time since surgery, type of surgery, and type of surgical reconstruction |
| Data collection |
| 17. Interview guide | Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested? | It was not known what experiences participants would have had at the outset of focus group meetings, therefore an inductive unstructured approach was utilised |
| 18. Repeat interviews | Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many? | Four focus group interviews were carried out, individual participants only took part in a single focus group meeting each |
| 19. Audio/visual recording | Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data? | Microsoft Teams was used to record meetings |
| 20. Field notes | Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group? | Yes, these notes contributed to the analysis |
| 21. Duration | What was the duration of the interviews or focus group? | Mean length 54 minutes (range 50 – 57 minutes) |
| 22. Data saturation | Was data saturation discussed? | This was an opportunistic convenience sample and data saturation was not considered. Results from this study will facilitate obtaining informational power in an ongoing purposive qualitative study |
| 23. Transcripts returned | Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction? | No – they were not consented to do so |
| **Domain 3: Analysis and findings** |
| Data analysis |
| 24. Number of data coders | How many data coders coded the data? | Three data coders – CT West, SC Sodergren, L Calman |
| 25. Description of the coding tree | Did authors provide a description of the coding tree? | Given in Figure 2 in a mind map format |
| 26. Derivation of themes | Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data? | Inductively derived from data |
| 27. Software | What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data? | Nvivo 1.7.1 and QualtricsTM |
| 28. Participant checking | Did participants provide feedback on the findings? | No – they were not consented to do so |
| Reporting |
| 29. Quotations presented | Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes / findings? Was each quotation identified? e.g. participant number | Yes, a code was allocated to each participant |
| 30. Data and findings consistent | Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings? | Yes |
| 31. Clarity of major themes | Were major themes clearly presented in the findings? | Yes – in Figure 2, Table 3, subheadings within results, within quotation marks in the discussion, and presented again in conclusions |
| 32. Clarity of minor themes | Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes? | Yes – in Figure 2, Table 3, and narratively within results. Polarising statements are given in Table 3 and the discussion. |

Table S1 – Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist