Reviewer's report

Title: A worked example of "best fit" framework synthesis: A systematic review of views concerning the taking of potential chemopreventive agents

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Reviewer: Corrine Voils

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript presents a qualitative research synthesis based on framework analysis, in which the findings from qualitative studies are mapped onto an existing theoretical framework. Through the process, the authors suggested ways that the framework could be enhanced by adding greater specificity to relationships in the model and by adding new variables to the model. The manuscript represents a substantial contribution to the literature and provides a good example of a methodology that others could apply to synthesis. The paper is well-written and the methods are appropriate and well described. The manuscript could be strengthened further by consideration of a few issues.

Minor Essential Revisions

One issue is the resultant model in Figure 2. One wonders whether the paths are correctly specified. This is difficult to discern, in part, because the specific codes for each construct are not included in the paper. A table with these would add clarity. As an example, when I read “physical properties,” I suppose that side effects might be included (though they may not be), and I believe that side effects would be one of the risks considered in the risk/benefit analysis. Thus, physical properties may be more appropriately placed as contributing to risk/benefit balance rather than to use and maintenance. I also wondered if age and gender only contribute to use and maintenance or if they could be subsumed under sociodemographic in “internal/personal factors” and then have an arrow from that large circle to use and maintenance. This may be more appropriate as I could imagine that health status also contributes to use and maintenance. I also wonder if decision-making and risk/benefit balance are really separate processes. It seems that risk/benefit balance is part of the decision-making process. At minimum, it would seem that the order of those two constructs should be switched. One also wonders if it would be more accurate to subsume risk/benefit balance under decision-making. It is important for the authors to consider these issues, examine their data, and determine if the model could be redrawn slightly.

Discretionary Revisions

The issue of speed of conducting a systematic review is frequently cited as a motivation for conducting this type of synthesis. Why is speed so important? Unfortunately, the incorporation of synthesis into the evidence base is never immediate, so the need for speed is questionable. This issue should be explicated or downplayed. The authors may want to remind readers that
sometimes no existing model could serve as an appropriate starting place for a qualitative synthesis, so one may have to start from scratch anyway.

Finally, the discussion around study quality is a bit murky as to whether the issue is quality of the study or quality of reporting of the study. Word limits in journals, training of research personnel, and other factors contribute to discrepancies between what was actually done and what is reported in an article. Checklists frequently focus on what was reported, but the absence of something in an article does not mean that it was not done.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.