Reviewer's report

Title: Using the Framework Method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research

Version: 1 Date: 26 June 2013

Reviewer: Markus Themessl-Huber

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript is based on a relevant premise. It aims to elucidate the nature and feasibility of the Framework Method when used in multi-disciplinary teams as well as with researchers inexperienced with qualitative methods. It addresses and attempts to clarify key aspects of qualitative research, knowledge of which is often but mistakenly taken for granted.

The combination of presenting an overview of the analysis process and using a study to demonstrate different sections is helpful and interesting.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions

The Background section touches upon many relevant topics but it does not provide a coherent and well-structured overview. This section requires further editing.

I suggest providing an overview of the key aspects as well as challenges of qualitative data analysis followed by an account of how the Framework Methods can be used to address these while also including the method's limitations.

At the bottom of page 3 such limitations are briefly mentioned as are other analysis approaches. While the manuscript's purpose is not to compare different analysis strategies, more information would be helpful about the type of research questions not suitable for the Framework Methods and the key reasons.

Also, this section should make it clear whether this manuscript has a particular FOCUS on the use of the Framework Methods by multi-disciplinary teams and/or researchers inexperienced with qualitative methods or whether this is just a MARGINAL consideration. In my opinion, the manuscript's relevance would be further increased by focusing more on the team/inexperienced researchers approach.

The discussion section lacks an evaluation of the main strengths and pitfalls of the Framework Approach, particularly when used with multi-disciplinary teams and/or researchers inexperienced in qualitative methods. This section would also gain from clarifying how this manuscript adds to the existing discussion on qualitative analysis.
Discretionary Revisions

On the top of page 4, the authors mention that the Framework Method is making use of a constant interplay between sampling, data collection, analysis and theory development. I think it is important to point out that this is not an essential feature of qualitative analysis. Rigorous qualitative analysis can also be conducted sequentially, depending on the research question, design and methodology.

Every research activity is influenced by the researcher, whether it is qualitative or quantitative; the key is to be aware of this and take appropriate steps to conduct a rigorous study. These steps differ between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Clarification of these points is important particularly if the manuscript’s focus is on educating researchers about the use of the Framework Method.

The Procedure for analysis section would benefit from at least an introductory statement indicating that qualitative data analysis considerations (as quantitative ones) need to start when developing the initial research design and not only when transcribing.

In the Familiarisation with the transcript section, it would be helpful to outline what procedure to follow when interviewer and data analyst are different people; in particular, how contextual factors influencing the interview are captured and communicated.

In the section Applying the analytic framework, it would be helpful to have an outline of how indexing is conducted without CAQDAS.

In the Interpreting the data section it may be helpful to suggest keeping a data log or note book to note ideas and observations throughout the research process, not only at his stage.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.