Reviewer's report

Title: Enhancing the scoping study methodology: A large, inter-professional team’s experience with Arksey and O’Malley’s framework

Version: 3 Date: 14 September 2012

Reviewer: Maria Grant

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this resubmission; it is much improved from the original submission.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The title of the paper indicates that its purpose is to enhance the scoping study methodology, while the subtitle refers to the large inter-professional team’s experience. I recommend that the summary of the abstract be used primarily to capitulate the recommended changes to the methodology for use by large inter-professional teams rather than recount the experiences team per se.

2. Purpose and Methodology
   a. The statement of the purpose and methodology used in developing this paper is presented at the end of the first discussion point; this should be presented earlier in the text.
   b. Please provide further details of the survey used to collect the team’s perspectives e.g. how many questions, when was the survey distributed, how were the results analysed. Please consider including a copy of the survey in the appendix.

3. What is a Scoping Study?
   a. It would be helpful to provide a description of the six steps of the Arksey and O’Malley framework before commencing the discussion of its shortcomings.
   b. Further detail of Arksey and O’Malley framework could also be incorporated into its description in Table 1 which currently only provides the headings of each stage.

4. Identifying the Research Question
   a. The authors indicate that they ‘did not heed sufficiently’ (page 10) the Arksey and O’Malley’s suggestions that ‘researchers will want to redefine search terms and undertake more sensitive searches of the literature’ (page 10). The authors also state that they recommend that ‘research follow this advice’ (page 11). I would propose that this reflects on the experience of the project team in using this methodology rather than an enhancement to the scoping study methodology itself.
b. Linked to stage one of the Arksey and O’Malley’s framework in Table 1 and the writing team’s statement about ‘the types of research that it can best support’, I believe a constructive link could be made here between the writing team pondering ‘the appropriateness of a scoping study to answer a question that is solely qualitative in nature’ (page 8).

5. Identifying Relevant Studies
a. The statement at the top of page 13 referring to remaining ‘consistent in our approach to study selection’ would be better reword or repositioned in the next section on study selection.

6. Study Selection
a. From the information presented in Table 1 it appears that it is the Levac et al team that indicate that two reviewers apply the inclusion/exclusion criteria to papers. However, if the writing team are correct that this suggestion originates from Arksey and O’Malley (page 13), further detail is required in the table to make this explicit.

7. Charting the Data
a. Rather than start with a statement about determining ‘if we needed to make adjustments to the typology chart’ (page 15) consider starting with detail of the ‘seven pieces of information on each article’ charted by the Arksey and O’Malley framework followed by an explanation of why the team chose to use the Rutten et al typology instead.

b. ‘Again, effective communication was important.’ (page 16) This is the first time the importance of effective communication has been explicitly mentioned. Should it appear elsewhere too?

8. Collating, Summarizing and Reporting the Results
a. Given the stated aim of the paper, I recommend focusing on the process of using the scoping review methodology in general rather than the findings of the colorectal cancer review in particular. On this basis the section starting ‘Our findings…’ and ending ‘… chemotherapy options’ on page 19 could be removed. Other examples exist throughout the paper.

9. Optional Stage, Consultation Exercise
a. The writing team declare they ‘have mixed views’ (page 20) about consulting with stakeholders but then state that stakeholder participation ‘was a real strength of our inter-disciplinary approach’ and ‘we have built this consultation process into our current research… [and] see it is a fundamental step to determine how what the literature says resonates with…’ stakeholders (page 20). In my opinion, this is a very definitive view.

b. ‘That being said, not all stakeholders will be appropriate to be included and researchers must make this decision carefully.’ Please provide a basis for this statement together with an indication of how the recommendation could be implement. This will enhance the utility of the recommendation.
10. A Large Inter-Professional Team…
a. That several team members being ‘new to research’ (page 23) is a separate
issue not necessarily related to group size.
b. Please conclude this section with a statement of specific learning points and
recommendations that could be added to enhance the framework in terms of its
use by large inter-professional teams.

11. Lessons Learned
a. Please delineate where the proposed new definition for scoping studies ends
(page 24).

12. Table 1
a. To maximise its value, please ensure that linking references are made
throughout the text to the table of comparative recommendations.
b. To distinguish between Levac et al’s recommendations for the enhancement to
the framework generally and the writing teams recommendations specifically in
connection to the frameworks use by large inter-professional teams, please
consider amending the headings of the table.

Minor Essential Revisions
13. Table 1 is also labelled Figure 1.

Discretionary Revisions
14. Lessons Learned

a. A question to reflect upon: At what point does an enhancement to an existing
framework change the intended purpose of the original framework? When posing
this question I have in mind the proposed replacement of the ‘rapid’ approach of
a scoping search which that of a thorough and thoughtful approach (page 24).

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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.