Reviewer's report

Title: Using instrumental case study design to evaluate the impact of specialist and advanced practice roles on clinical outcomes: The SCAPE Study

Version: 1 Date: 11 December 2012

Reviewer: Elaine Maxwell

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Although the aim is included in the text, it was not immediately clear from the abstract and introductory paragraphs that this study used case matched case studies with control and intervention cases. I think this should be made more explicit in the abstract.

6. Are the limitations of the work clearly stated?

The paper does not consider the limitations of case study e.g. that it generates theoretical rather statistical generalisations.

Q8. Do this title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Not exactly, the aim is to use case study to strengthen a sequential mixed method study but the title suggests a case study only design.

Major compulsory revisions

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The paper used case study to test the propositions derived from the literature and the phase 1 exploration of the complexity of specialist and advanced practice. The aim of the paper is to illustrate how case study contributes to a sequential explanatory mixed method design.

The paper does not explore the different epistemological approaches to case study, which is, as Yin (1984 p.15) describes, a research strategy rather than a design. Luck et al suggest that the flexibility of case study is rigorous only if the philosophical choices are justified and data collection methods are consistent with that philosophical choice. The authors of this paper suggest (p.7) that Yin and Stake employ different terminology but actually they have different epistemological bases.

The paper does not contrast case study with other methods of collecting and triangulating data from different sources, such as ethnography or narrative research.
The description of the analysis method sounds very similar to Framework (Ritchie and Spencer 1994) and it would be interesting how it differs from this.

**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