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

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Reviewer: Jo Rycroft-Malone

Reviewer's report:

As case study has been increasingly used within health services research, opportunities to learn from and develop the approach are welcome. In this paper the authors aim to show how an instrumental case study design was used within a mixed methods study of advanced practice roles, and in doing so reaffirm the usefulness of case study as an approach for studying a practice based phenomenon.

Major Compulsory Revisions

On reading and reflection on the contents of the manuscript, these are my observations on its contents:

Contribution- more attention needs to be paid to the aim of the manuscript in relation to the goal of illustrating the method. As the authors state it's important that the procedural steps of research activity are clear and well documented, and information is provided in the manuscript about the steps of this case study. However, the depth of detail and attention to critically reflecting on the approach is lacking, therefore any learning or potential development of the method is limited. The manuscript would be strengthened by a more critical, rather than descriptive account of the approach used - clearly articulating the potential contribution of the ideas it contains.

Underpinning of case study- the definitions and procedures of case study that both Stake and Yin offer are referred to within the paper, however their particular and different philosophical stances are not unpacked, and therefore conflated in the conduct and reporting of the case study. A recognition and reconciliation within the manuscript of the different positions of Yin and Stake would strengthen the methodological underpinning of the description.

Additional information- there are areas in the manuscript that require further information:
- more detail about the strengths and weaknesses of case study, including the debate about case study as a method or methodology - and a section on the limitations of this study
- the purposive sampling criteria used for site selection
- how 'the case' was bounded- various levels are currently mentioned -organisation, ward, clinic
- discussion about the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case study (albeit lacking some clarity)
- about the development of the theoretical propositions and specifically how they were applied/evaluated
- an account of how the logic model was constructed and applied - including sight of it within the manuscript, or in an appended file
- a consideration of how the approach to analysis described is different from a framework analysis approach (e.g. Richie & Spencer), and whether using this approach potentially limits richness of description and consequently explanation
- further information about how the case study within a multiphase study 'allowed for the case to be redefined' (p17).

The final section of the manuscript would benefit from a stronger argument as to why researchers should consider the suitability of case study - in a context of many researchers already using this approach and therefore probably don't need to be convinced of its usefulness.

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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