Author's response to reviews

Title: The feasibility of gathering opinion leader data for a tailored implementation intervention in a secondary healthcare setting: a comparison of response rates to alternative data collection techniques

Authors:

Katherine L Farley (katherine.farley@york.ac.uk)
Andria Hanbury (andria.hanbury@york.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

We would like to submit a revised version of our manuscript ‘The feasibility of gathering opinion leader data for a tailored implementation intervention in a secondary healthcare setting: a comparison of response rates to alternative data collection techniques’ for consideration by your journal Medical Research Methodology.

Following your requests, we have:

1. Amended the abstract to a structured format as requested.

2. Endeavored to meet the request to conform to the CONSORT reporting checklist in the main manuscript as much as possible. We have been through the manuscript to confirm that, where feasible, each item has been covered. As this was not a clinical trial, there were some items that were not applicable to this study. Please let us know if this does not meet the requirements of the journal.

To improve patient outcomes, it is important not only to understand and to try and change people’s health behaviours, but also to understand and to try and change health professionals’ behaviour in keeping with evidence-based recommendations. Opinion leaders can contribute to efforts to change the behaviour of health professionals but researchers need to find efficient ways of identifying appropriate and well-connected individuals. One way of identifying opinion leaders for use in behaviour change interventions is to use a questionnaire-based sociometric technique. These ask respondents to nominate influential peers, and to provide additional information, for example, the frequency and mode of contact they have with them. This data collection can be resource intensive and burdensome for busy health professionals to respond to. Further, the effectiveness of opinion leader interventions is variable and data identifying opinion leaders is not always applied in subsequent behaviour change...
interventions, suggesting that the data collected may be either inadequate or of poor quality. This article, therefore, compares the sociometric technique of identifying opinion leaders with a simpler, single, ‘champion’ item, comparing response rates and the degree of influence the identified opinion leaders have over the target population of health professionals. Our article also highlights the practical challenges associated with trying to identify and use opinion leaders in behaviour change interventions. This article, therefore, provides an accessible overview of the process of trying to identify opinion leaders, and the associated practical challenges, and will be of interest to those working in the area of behaviour change and implementation research.

I look forward to hearing from your journal in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Farley