Reviewer's report

Title: Using logic model methods in systematic review synthesis: describing complex pathways in referral management interventions.

Version: 3 Date: 17 March 2014

Reviewer: Ellen Schultz

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a good job addressing issues brought up by both reviewers and the improvement in the manuscript is readily apparent. Figure 2 could use a few additional improvements, under the direction of the editorial staff. The central argument of this paper is that logic models can be an effective and efficient means of conveying complex information. So it is essential that the authors make their logic model figure as clear and readily understandable as possible.

Minor compulsory revisions:

1) Figure 2 is improved, but there still appears to be some inconsistency in formatting of different levels of evidence. For example, the third box from the top, in far left column, uses ALL CAPS without underlining for "ADDITIONAL PRIMARY CARE STAFF" and "SYSTEM OF GATEKEEPING." However, the figure legend does not indicate what level of evidence this corresponds to. If it is the stronger evidence category, shouldn't it be ALL CAPS with underlining? The text on page 10 notes these as two cases where evidence pointed to the potential for worse outcomes with intervention. If this is the reason that the formatting is different for these two interventions, then you must add to the Figure 2 legend to make this clear.

2) Also in Figure 2, it is confusing that in the legend the conflicting evidence and single study text is italicized, but text is not italicized for these categories within the figure itself.

3) It is still not clear from either the text or Figure 2 how the figure distinguishes no evidence from inconclusive evidence. The text mentions the examples of "the potential role of carers as well as the patient in doctor-patient interactions" as one area highlighted by experts but where no evidence was found. Yet these do not appear to be included in Figure 2, nor is there anything in the figure legend to indicate absence of evidence (for interventions, factors or outcomes suggested by experts). Please make clear within the text and/or an expanded legend for Figure 2 whether topics mentioned by experts but with no evidence identified from the literature are included in the figure. If not in the figure, then make clear that they are being mentioned in the text but purposefully omitted from the figure due to lack of evidence. (However, this latter method is less desirable, because it means that the figure cannot stand on its own without the accompanying text. Ideally, the figure would convey all important information without the text, other than a descriptive figure legend. That is, after all, the point of the article: to argue
that logic models are a valuable tool for conveying evidence).

Discretionary revisions:
1) I continue to feel that a more descriptive figure legend for Figure 2 would improve the article. Given how central this figure is to the article, I would think you would want it to be as easily understandable as possible. Currently, one must read through a lot of the results text, while flipping back and forth to the figure, to understand what it is. The description of the model in the abstract would be a good place to start, but with modifications to help readers walk through the model from left to right.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.