Reviewer's report

Title: Methods for the synthesis of qualitative research: a critical review

Version: 2 Date: 21 May 2009

Reviewer: Rosaline Barbour

Reviewer's report:

This paper provides a timely and very comprehensive review of the state of the art of synthesis of qualitative research papers. It is well-written and presents a clear argument.

Discretionary Revisions:

One minor point was that I was slightly puzzled as to why Ritchie and Spencer's earlier chapter published in 1994 in Analyzing Qualitative Data (eds.) Alan Bryman & Robert G. Burgess (and the original formulation of 'framework analysis - admittedly before it became thus labelled) is not included. Another reference which might be helpful in terms of raising some of the issues that surround the identification of qualitative papers for review and synthesis is Barbour, R.S. & Barbour, M. (2003) valuating and synthesizing qualitative research: the need to develop a distinctive approach, Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, 9(2): 179-186.

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.