Reviewer's report

Title: Qualitative Evaluation of a Local Coronary Heart Disease Treatment Pathway: Practical Implications and Theoretical Framework

Version: 1 Date: 23 February 2012

Reviewer: Judith Cole

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MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

In the Abstract Background section:
1. Add the word ‘the patient between’ in this sentence:
   ‘Due to its chronic character shared care of the patient between general practitioner (GP) and cardiologist (C) is required.’
2. Add an apostrophe after GPs.
3. Add the letter s at the end of the word opinion.
4. Add the word ‘to’ to make ‘into’:
   ‘The objective of this study was first to evaluate GPs’ opinions regarding the pathway and its practical implications and secondly to suggest a theoretical framework of the findings by feeding the identified key factors influencing the pathway implementation into a multi-dimensional model.’

In the Abstract Conclusions section:
5. Add an apostrophe after the word factors:
   ‘… but go a step further and propose a theoretical framework to understand the key factors’ influence …’.

In the main Introduction section:
6. Add percentage sign after 7.0:
   ‘In the United States, about 7.0% (women) to 9.1 % (men)’.
7. Add comma after ‘continuous’:
   ‘Most patients with CHD need lifelong, continuous, complex medical care…’.
8. Delete ‘A’ and capitalize Better:
   ‘Better coordination and communication between GP…’.
9. Add ‘the’ before ‘main objectives’:
   ‘… providing optimal evidence-based medical care for patients are the main objectives of clinical guidelines.’
10. Add ‘the’ after ‘Despite’:
‘Despite the high scientific quality of most guidelines …’.

11. Delete ‘the’ and replace it with ‘their’. Delete ‘of guidelines’:
‘Despite the high scientific quality of most guidelines and their wide promulgation, their actual impact on clinical practice and quality of care is limited.’

12. Delete ‘showed’ and replace with ‘have shown’:
‘Numerous international studies have shown that effective and lasting …’.

13. Delete ‘defined through their’. Delete ‘their local translation, a’. Replace latter with ‘locally translatable, and involve a’:
‘One approach to improve implementation is the use of clinical pathways which are multidisciplinary, locally translatable, and involve a stepwise procedure, determined timeframes and standardized care for a specific clinical problem.’

14. In next paragraph, beginning ‘To date, most experience with treatment pathways …’, there are 5 instances of hyphenated terms ‘Beveridge-type’ and ‘Bismarck-type’, and there are more throughout the manuscript. These terms should not be hyphenated.

15. Last line on page 4 – add apostrophe after GPs:
‘On the one hand we aimed to evaluate GPs’ opinion regarding…’.

In Methods section, Development and description of CHD pathway section:

16. First sentence, add comma after ‘Germany’:
‘In 2008, GPs and cardiologists from the Marburg region, Germany, were invited …’.

17. Second sentence, replace ‘14’ with word ‘fourteen’ because it is at the beginning of the sentence:
‘Fourteen GPs and 4 cardiologists took part.’

18. Third sentence: ‘a bottom-up approach’. Can a sentence be added to explain what this is, as the reader may not know?

19. Last sentence of this section: ‘…we provided both a laminated pocket version…’. To whom did you provide this?

The treatment pathway is briefly described but not in enough detail. Would it be possible to include a figure to show the pathway in detail, such as a reproduction of the laminated pocket version which is mentioned?

In Methods section, Study design section:

20. First sentence, add fullstop after ‘CHD’. Delete ‘on the’ and replace with ‘This larger study was on the’:
‘Our study was part of a larger feasibility study (28) with 18 GPs in three study arms (8 pathway developers, 6 pathway users, 6 control group) and 290 consecutively recruited patients with CHD. This larger study was on the development and evaluation of a local CHD treatment pathway…’.

21. Remove hyphen from ‘mixed-method’ and add an ‘s’ to the end of method.
Should be: mixed methods study.

22. ‘An overview of the intended study design is given in Figure 1. Does this study design refer to the larger feasibility study? If so, add:

‘An overview of the intended larger feasibility study design is given in Figure 1.’

23. ‘In brief, the project aimed to improve the shared care…’.

Does this refer to the larger project? If so, insert: ‘In brief, the larger project ...’.

24. Insert apostrophe after ‘physicians’:

‘The quantitative study investigated physicians’ adherence to pathway…’.

25. Insert apostrophes after GPs and physicians. Delete ‘assumed’ and replace with ‘ascertained’:

‘To gain further insight into GPs’ opinion regarding the pathway and the factors influencing GPs’ decision to (not) implement the CHD pathway, we conducted this qualitative study in the middle of the feasibility study, so that physicians’ experience with the pathway could be ascertained.’

26. Delete ‘between’ and replace with ‘during’. Delete comma after LK and add ‘who was’:

‘Face-to-face interviews were undertaken during February and March 2010 in the physicians’ practices by one of the authors (LK) who was not involved in the development of the pathway.’

27. Delete ‘both’ and replace with ‘all’:

‘GPs and patients were informed in detail about the study and all gave their written consent to the study participation.’.

28. Change ‘ethic’ to ‘ethical’:

‘Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the...’.

Methods section, Participants and recruitment procedures section:

29. Second sentence, change ‘are’ to ‘were’:

‘Thus, by selecting respondents that were most likely to yield useful information...’.

30. Third sentence, add ‘did’ between ‘we not’. Change ‘included’ to ‘include’:

‘As the GPs of the control group had no experience with the pathway we did not include them in the study.’

31. Fourth sentence, capitalize practice: should be Department of General Practice.

32. Last sentence, change ‘neighbour’ to ‘neighbouring’.

Methods section, Data Collection section:

33. ‘The interview guideline ... was informed by previously conducted studies of our department ...’. Were other sources in the literature used, not only those from your own department?"
Methods section, Data analysis section:
34. Fourth sentence, begin the sentence with ‘The’. Delete ‘afterwards discussed to evaluate the coding frame’ and replace with ‘then the evaluation of the coding frame was discussed’:
‘The first three interviews were coded and then the evaluation of the coding frame was discussed.’
35. Fifth sentence, change ‘analyzing’ to ‘analysis’. Change ‘occurred’ to ‘emerged’. Delete ‘to have achieved’ and add ‘was achieved’ at end of sentence:
‘Within the analysis process no further categories emerged, so we considered that theme saturation was achieved’.
36. Seventh sentence, delete ‘the’ before ‘qualitative’:
‘The data analysis and interpretation followed the standards of qualitative content analysis.’

Results section, Study Population section:
37. First sentence, change ‘twelve’ to 12. Delete ‘of originally 14’:
‘Of the 20 physicians invited, 12 pathway developers (8 GPs, 4 cardiologists) and four pathway users consented to conducting face-to-face interviews.’
38. Second sentence, delete ‘due to’.

Results section, Individual flexibility section:
39. In quote, change ‘everyone’ to ‘every one’:
‘And I think that every one of us has a certain plan of how to proceed for every clinical picture.’

Results section, Interaction related factors section:
40. Second sentence, delete ‘the’ before ‘knowledge’ and add ‘the’ before ‘patient’s’:
‘Furthermore, the participating physicians reported that knowledge of the patient’s background …’.

Discussion section, Main Findings section:
41. Last line on page 15, add ‘by’ after ‘physicians’:
‘…enhance the compliance in physicians by about 32% …’.
42. Page 16, ninth line from top of page, change patient’s to patients’.
43. Fifteenth line from top of page, change ex- to exclude.
44. Sixteenth line from top of page, change physician’s to physicians’.

Discussion section, practical implication section:
45. Third line of this section, replace ‘treating’ with ‘been treating. Delete ‘before’:
‘… some of the physicians reported to have been treating their patients already
like the pathway recommends.’

46. Fifth line of this section, change ‘on its own no sufficient’ to ‘on its own it is an insufficient’.

47. Ninth line of this section, add a comma after Further.

Discussion section, Theoretical framework section:

48. Change ‘give’ to ‘giving’. Add ‘is’ after ‘which’:

‘Besides reporting our findings and give some practical implications we aimed to abstract our results and giving a theoretical framework (see Figure 2), which is based on the main categories mentioned in Table 1.

Additional comments:

The objectives of the study are clear.

The study design – qualitative interviews – is appropriate.

The study is not representative of the general population of GPs and cardiologists because those interviewed about the new treatment pathway are those who designed and used it. This is acknowledged in the discussion section.

Controls were not sought in this study – the reason given is that they weren’t using the pathway but would it be useful to compare them to those who were using it? There is a control arm in the larger study so do you think this is sufficient?

The sample size is small but perhaps sufficient for this evaluation study.

In the Methods section, the treatment pathway is briefly described but not in enough detail. Would it be possible to include a figure to show the pathway in detail, such as a reproduction of the laminated pocket version which is mentioned?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.