Reviewer’s report

Title: Challenges to Implementation of Developmental Screening in Urban Primary Care: A Mixed Methods Study

Version: 1 Date: 17 July 2013

Reviewer: Kevin Marks

Reviewer’s report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions-- none really.

2. Minor essential Revisions-- see my below comments about the "Abstract", "Background", "Discussion" and "Reference" sections.

3. Discretionary Revisions-- see all my other comments below.

Title: I felt that your title properly described the contents of your article. Looks good.

Abstract: Is your research question well defined? I’d say the answer is yes. The second sentence in the abstract’s “background” section frame your study’s primary purpose (even though it was somewhat oversimplified and not posed as a question). My main suggestion for your abstract is to somehow incorporate the key findings from your clinician focus group into your abstract’s “results” section. The clinician focus group data seems needed to support your abstract’s conclusion. I know that word count limits with abstracts can be an issue though.

Background: 1st page, 1st paragraph, 2nd sentence… “However, only 30% of children with developmental delays are diagnosed before school entrance.” Does the original source of that frequently used statistic really come from reference #3 (Earls et al., 2006)? Or are you referencing an article that referenced that same statistic? Please double check that reference and make sure it’s correct.

2nd page, 1st paragraph—not to be petty but your definitions for the terms “screening” and “surveillance” are, in my humble opinion, oversimplified and not entirely accurate. Please consider using more precise, up-to-date definitions for the terms “screening” and “surveillance”. Does the use of any standardized instrument mean you are screening? Would you consider the Bayley Scales a screening tool? And if our core objectives are to promptly detect, refer and provide early intervention for children with unfolding developmental-behavioral problems, then should the term “surveillance” encompass more than just a clinician’s history and physical exam (which includes observations of the child and parent-child interactions)?

The last two sentences of the main text’s background section text were helpful in framing this article’s purpose. Well written!
Methods: Thank you for succinctly explaining the “Theory of Planned Behavior” under the "Focus Groups" section. Before reading your article, I felt compelled to read more about this on Wikipedia. I felt that your methods section was written appropriately and that your methods were well described. The data within this section looked sound. However, I can imagine that survey and implementation data can, at times, be messy.

Results: No major comments or criticisms here. I thought that this manuscript adhered to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

Discussion: For me, the most important statistic within your entire article was what I read in the 4th paragraph of your discussion section..."Of those referred to Early Intervention, 128 (49%) completed the referral." Take away message = referral care coordination is a really important concept and so, my suggestion for this paragraph is to emphasize that developmental-behavioral surveillance should not end once an EI or other pediatric subspecialty referral has been initiated by the clinician. I also noted that your discussion section’s 5th paragraph did a good job of reviewing your study’s limitations.

Conclusions: Your results and discussion section did an adequate job of supporting your study’s conclusions.

References: In the “background” section, please consider adding references that more precisely and accurately define the terms “screening” and “surveillance”. In the “discussion” section, please consider adding a reference that supports the concept that a clinician’s “surveillance” should not end after an EI or pediatric sub-specialty referral has been generated.

Tables and Figures: No major concerns. I especially enjoyed reading through tables 2 and 3. Good work!

Overall, I would recommend accepting this article for publication after some minor revisions were made. This study makes several contributions to the field of developmental-behavioral screening and surveillance. Well done!

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.