Reviewer’s report

Title: Challenges to Providing Quality Substance Abuse Treatment Services for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: A Qualitative Study

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Reviewer: Deborah Bassett

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The authors report on the findings of a qualitative component of a larger research study that looked at some of the challenges of providing substance abuse treatment services for AI/AN communities as identified by the staff working at 18 centers. It’s evident that the question being addressed is “what are the challenges. . . as identified by the staff. . .”, but it would be helpful to state this explicitly upfront as either a research question or the purpose of the study. The authors present sound data that richly describe some of the main challenges experienced by staff in the 18 centers and address a serious health issue in Indian country. The study is especially strong in its multi-site data collection. Qualitative methods are certainly appropriate to this type of study and appear to be adequately implemented as described. The manuscript adheres to the appropriate ethical standards for academic institutional review boards as well as for research in Native communities (by protecting participant and center identity, e.g.). The main limitation of this study, noted by the authors, is that the participants did not include actual patients experiencing the services being studied. Perhaps an explanation could be included for why they were omitted or a stronger case made earlier in the paper for why the perspectives of the staff are important for this particular study (e.g., as a beginning point in understanding the challenges). The discussion and conclusions follow logically from the presentation of the data. Overall, the manuscript is well-written and coherent. The title could be more descriptive. I’d suggest omitting “a qualitative study” and instead say something like “perspectives of staff from 18 treatment centers.”

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