Reviewer's report

Title: A Qualitative Exploration of the Perceptions and Information Needs of Public Health Inspectors Responsible for Food Safety

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Reviewer: Heather Yeatman

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer’s comments

Article: A qualitative exploration of the perceptions and information needs of public health inspectors responsible for food safety.

This is a very interesting and well written paper. The approach was sound and the topic area of relevance to public health. The detail reported in the Results should be shortened, as it would be of only limited interest to a majority of readers and more analysis of the results could be undertaken and presented in the Discussion. Overall, the paper reports on a sound piece of research and is clearly written.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The purpose of the research was clearly articulated on page 4.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods were very appropriate and were well described on pages 5-6.

3. Are the data sound?
The data are sound and are well illustrated using direct quotes from the focus groups. The results section is very detailed and would benefit from being more concise – currently the detail is useful for a small group of readers who are involved in developing programs for these professionals, but that level of detail is not required by the majority of readers.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion section is well written and is well connected with the relevant literature. The discussion could also position the findings at a more strategic level, eg the need to monitor the interpretation of food standards to ensure consistency of implementation and to minimise food handlers’ confusion.

The conclusion should be reconsidered. There are some interesting insights from this study that are not reflected in the conclusion, eg need for centralised support
for education materials and to ensure consistency of interpretation of standards.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes,

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Very clearly written. Only minor grammatical issues:
# P. 3, first sentence of Background, “…. analysis by Campbell …."
# P. 9, last line “… participant who said: ….”
# P. 10, 3rd line “Lack of consistency. Several participants cited lack of consistency ….”
# Results inconsistently refers to participants as their specific gender “he” or “she”, or as “he/she” – eg page 14, lines 8 & 10. Other occurrences of this inconsistency need to be checked.

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

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'