Author's response to reviews

Title: The quantity, nature and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian mentoring literature: A systematic review

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Version: 6 Date: 18 November 2014

Author's response to reviews: see over
Author's response to reviews

Title:

The quantity, nature, quality and characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian mentoring literature: A systematic review

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Version: 2 Date: 18 November 2014

Author's response to reviews: Please see over
Dear Editor

In addition to the reviewer comments addressed below, we have also attended to comments made by you as Editor:

§ Line numbering was inserted;

§ The review is presented in accord with PRISMA guidelines; and

§ A completed PRISMA checklist was included as an additional file.

1. Reviewer’s report

Title: The quantity, nature and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian mentoring literature: A systematic review

Version: 4 Date: 9 October 2014

Reviewer: Elizabeth Comino

Reviewer’s report:
This systematic review explores the available black and grey literature on mentoring for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Introduction

(major) A definition of mentoring for the purposes of this paper would have been useful. Mentoring can be a very broad concept, have many different purposes, and as many applications. The introduction would be strengthened by a clearer description of the sort of mentoring that the authors are seeking information on. For example is it mentoring Aboriginal people in professional positions or is the target for the general community? The methods suggest the latter. What is the aim of the mentoring to be reviewed? This could be general support role or more specifically targeting decision making. Some a priori information about the who, what, where, and why would be informative.

§ There is a clear definition of mentoring and discussion of such starting on page 5 line 148.

§ There is inclusion of the kind of mentoring for which we sought information and some a priori information about the who, what, where, and why the information was sought.

(major) The methods section (page 5 – page 6) and figure1 are repetitive and could be deleted as the information is repeated in the explanation of the stepwise approach below.

§ We agree with the reviewer. The methods section has been made more concise and less repetitive by taking on the suggestions made for a more succinct methods section. All text was deleted from page 5 “search strategy” to page 6 “Figure 1: Search Strategy HERE” and rewritten to read: “As outlined in Figure 1 a five-step systematic review method was adopted. The five-steps are described in detail below” then going straight to Step 1 description.
Page 8, para 2, line 6-7 – this statement and the explanation that follows would be more appropriate in the introduction where it would also be more useful to differentiate different sorts of mentoring such as mentoring, decision support, coaching, etc.

§ The type of mentoring that gave rise to the review is now included as a statement in the introduction section: mentoring for youth and families. A more detailed discussion comes later in the paper.

Results
The range of 15 papers and their contents is probably what one would expect, given the research question and search terms used.

§ No response required.

Inclusion of the tables within the main body of the paper is an issue as these tables are integral to the text and not additional information for clarification.

§ All tables have been included within the main body of the paper as suggested.

The four strategies identified are feasible and would align with current knowledge of appropriate cultural practices.

§ No response required.

Discussion
Given the broad definitions and scope of this review and the limited literature within the field, the discussion seems to be both over-analysed and yet non-specific. Surely there was some scope to include information on what is known about mentoring programs for the non-Aboriginal community (this also a limited field of research) and discuss the components that are the same and different.

§ Information on what is known about mentoring programs for the non-Aboriginal community have been integrated as part of the discussion particularly in terms of the components (strategies and outcomes) that are the same and different.

Conclusions
The focus on research methods is not needed here. This is a methodological issue that should be secondary to the primary aims of the paper. In terms of methods a plea for strong evaluation strategies would have held more traction with this reviewer than a call for experiment. Other than the lack of evidence, what were some of the key messages for anyone trying to establish a mentoring program within an Aboriginal community?

§ An appeal for strong evaluation strategies was made more prominent in the conclusion.

§ Key messages for anyone trying to establish a mentoring program within an Aboriginal community have been included.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
2. Reviewer’s report

Title: The quantity, nature and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian mentoring literature: A systematic review

Version: 4
Date: 3 October 2014

Reviewer: Joanne Luke

Reviewer’s report:

I would firstly like to declare that as a researcher who works across the area of epidemiology and chronic disease I am not at all versed in the academic literature or theory around the field of mentoring. However, as an early career Aboriginal researcher who has been provided ‘mentorship’ by various Indigenous and non-Indigenous people both at the academic and community level I can appreciate the need for a best practise model around mentoring. I personally have benefited immensely from mentoring, but have also been harmed by tokenistic ‘mentoring’. I believe understanding the characteristics of empowering mentoring as opposed to disempowering ‘mentoring’ for Aboriginal people is important and this paper sets about doing this. This paper considers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait context of mentoring. This is important often research fails to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts and epistemologies. This paper also looks at empowerment (control) an important social determinant that is recognised widely by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a driver of health. The paper is also aligned with current policy priorities around evidence-based practice.

With regards to the BMC PH points to consider

• The question is well defined.

  § No response required.

• Methods are very thorough. If anything, I would suggest making it more concise and less repetitive.

  § The methods section has been made more concise and less repetitive by taking on the suggestions made for a more succinct methods section. All text was deleted from page 5 “search strategy” to page 6 “Figure 1: Search Strategy HERE” and rewritten to read: “As outlined in Figure 1 a five-step systematic review method was adopted. The five-steps are described in detail below” then going straight to Step 1 description.

• The data arising from the review appears to have been appropriately reported and interpreted.

  § No response required.
• All figures appear genuine
  § No response required.

• The manuscript adheres to relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. However, I believe there is some data in the discussion (figure 4) would sit better in results.
  § Figure 4 has been moved to the results section.

• The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data. Incorporation of Aboriginal epistemologies has meant that the research is balanced.

• Limitations are stated. I think these should be in the discussion session as opposed to results section.
  § The limitations section has been repositioned to follow the discussion - moved according to the suggestion by the reviewer.

• Authors acknowledge this is the first systematic review of the quantity, nature, quality and characteristics of Indigenous mentoring.
  § No response required.

• The writing and language is appropriate for an academic manuscript.
  § No response required.

Discretionary Revisions

• Abstract. Consider rephrasing ‘offending behaviour’ or clarify what offending behaviours are and who they are offending to (dominant culture/Aboriginal people/ everyone???)
  § The rephrasing of ‘offending behaviour’ has not been changed.

• Background- consider definition of empowerment in the text rather than as endnote
  § The definition of empowerment has been left as an endnote because its insertion in the text interrupts the flow.

• Methods- The text for search strategy is quite repetitive. I would consider editing to be more concise.- I would suggest delete all from page 5 “search strategy” to page 6 “Figure 1: Search Strategy HERE” and write “As outlined in Figure 1 a five-step systematic review method was adopted. The five-steps are described in detail below.” Then go straight to Step 1 description.
  § The methods section has been made succinct and changed as indicated by the reviewer.

• Methods page 9. The text states “In phase 1, publications were classified according to the type of publication; in Phase 2 original publications were classified”. Could you please add some words to describe that phase 2 classified to the domains of measurement, descriptive or intervention research.
  § Text added and changed as requested by the reviewer.
• **Results.** With regards to the text for figure 3. I would avoid using “declining again to one”, as it is a different time scale and not comparable to the other years 1yr vs 6 months. Instead something along the lines of “to mid 2012 (at the time of the search) only 1 paper had been published”.

  § “declining again to one” has been changed according to the request by the reviewer.

• **Results.** The context of programs is well described.

  § No response required.

• Is the limitations section for the results of discussion section?

  § The Limitations section has been repositioned to follow the discussion moved according to the suggestion by reviewer.

**Discussion.** The sentence “the findings show that Indigenous Australian mentoring has an emergent lifespan of 14 years”. I would change to “the findings show that literature around Indigenous”, as I would think mentoring (formal or otherwise) is not new, but they describing and writing about it is……

  § The sentence “the findings show that Indigenous Australian mentoring has an emergent lifespan of 14 years” changed to “the findings show that Indigenous Australian mentoring ‘literature’ has an emergent lifespan of 14 years” [line 483] as suggested by the reviewer.

• **Discussion:** figure 4 and the description of program characteristics. Should this be results or discussion?

  § Figure 4 has been moved to the results sections as suggested by the reviewer.

Overall I would see this paper as being useful for policy makers. Further to this, a real strength of the paper is that it has incorporated Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in reviewing and analysing the literature.

**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

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3. **Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** The quantity, nature and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian mentoring literature: A systematic review

**Version:** 4 **Date:** 14 October 2014

**Reviewer:** Melissa Lindeman

**Reviewer’s report:**
1. The research question is well defined. However, I suggest that some of the information included in the cover letter be incorporated into the paper itself as this sets out the context, reasons, and implications of the study very clearly and succinctly which is somewhat lacking in the paper.

§ Incorporated some of the context from the cover letter into the introduction.

2. The methods are appropriate and well described, although the level of detail may not be necessary.

§ The methods section has been made more concise and less repetitive by taking on the suggestions made for a more succinct methods section. All text was deleted from page 5 “search strategy” to page 6 “Figure 1: Search Strategy HERE” and rewritten to read: “As outlined in Figure 1 a five-step systematic review method was adopted. The five-steps are described in detail below” then going straight to Step 1 description.

3. The findings of the review are sound, but could benefit from a more succinct summary.

§ Figure 4 has been shifted from the discussion to the results [findings] section; and serves as a succinct summary of the findings.

4. The paper adheres to the relevant standards for a review, and limitations are clearly stated.

§ No response required.

5. The authors acknowledge previous work upon which they are building.

§ No response required.

6. The title and abstract are appropriate, and the writing is of a high standard.

§ No response required.

7. The findings are very surprising given the extensive focus on mentoring approaches in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs. The paper demonstrates the need for evaluation of these programs very clearly. However, the background and discussion may not reflect the extent to which mentoring approaches are used in these contexts in Australia. This is important context for the study.

§ Discretionary: No response was made.

Suggestions for revisions in Points 1,2,3 and 7 are discretionary.

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.