Reviewer's report

Title: How can knowledge exchange portals assist in knowledge management for evidence-informed decision making in public health? A systematic narrative review

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2013

Reviewer: Armita Adily

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This narrative review with a narrowly executed literature search strategy is flimsy as submitted. The authors use ‘portals’ as both a source of input for their search strategy and as the object of their study. For example, it is not clear why ProQUEST was considered as a database and not a KEP. To make this clearer for the reader, the authors must present their rationale for ‘database’ selection and classify the websites they use as either ‘databases’ for search strategy or as KEPs for their paper.

2. Methods: page 7, para 1-3: Data sources and search strategy as described in the Methods section are not satisfactory for a comprehensive systematic review. Only ‘Medline’ is correctly listed as a database of peer-reviewed articles.’ It is not clear why the authors did not search other relevant databases such as ‘EMBASE’ and ‘CINAHL’. ‘Web of Science’, ‘ProQUEST’ and ‘EBSCO’ are not databases. They are portals which allow access to a number of databases. The searched databases should be explicitly listed. For example, ‘Web of Science’ allows search in a number of databases including ‘Conference Proceedings Citation Index-Science (CPCI-S)’. The conference proceedings that are found in CPCI-S may not have been published in the peer-reviewed journals yet.

3. It is a problem that the authors do not define ‘KEPs in public health’ as a subset of all KEPs. How did they define ‘public health’ when they excluded ‘clinical’ KEPs? How did this figure in their method?

4. Page7, last para: Clearer inclusion/exclusion criteria are needed. More details and rationale for exclusion criteria should be provided. For example, it is not clear why the publications about the portals which are ‘designed to support health services management or clinical decision making’ and ‘intended for online tertiary or community education’ were excluded from this review. The publications on ‘online library catalogues’ were excluded from this review. However, the authors included an evaluation study which assessed use and access to CIAP.

5. The search strategy was restricted to English language. This should be mentioned in the Methods section.

6. The search was conducted for the peer-reviewed articles which were
published between April 2001 and April 2010. Given that this manuscript was submitted to the journal in September 2013, the search for peer reviewed articles is outdated. Perhaps the authors could use the reviewers’ comments to tighten up their methodology and repeat the study right up to the minute.

7. Page 8, para 2: Structuring: Search strategy results should be given in the Results Section not in the Methods Section.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Page 8, para 2: the number of articles which addressed ‘audiences' was not given as (n=2).

2. Page 8, para 2, line 4: Online articles from grey literature were not categorised.

3. Page 8, para2, last sentence and Table 1: Of the nine selected portals, seven were listed. EUPHIX is no longer available due to discontinuation of funding. This should be acknowledged in the revised manuscript. The link given in Table 1 for ‘Florida Expertnet' does not allow access to this website.

4. Page 10, last para; page 11, first para: Unclear. If 60 portals were reviewed from only one of the articles included in this review, why only 7 were given in Table 1?

5. Acknowledgement: It is unclear why a list of organisations which are affiliated with the CIRHER but were not involved in this study are included in the acknowledgement.

6. Use of acronyms when the full term was not introduced earlier: Page 10, para 2, last sentence, line 9 (RSS feeds); page 14, para 3,(KM).

Level of interest

This is an article of importance in its field. The authors have identified a growing phenomenon in health care which is the rising number of portals to support knowledge transfer. These are referred to as KEPs. There is no doubt that we need greater scholarship to underpin ongoing development of KEPs. However the reader never quite gets a handle on what exactly characterises KEPs by way of function or impact.

Quality of written English

Clear English writing. However, this manuscript is not suitable for publication unless extensively edited. Logical structuring should improve.

Statistical review

The manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests
I declare that I have no competing interest.

What next?

I am unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions.

**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 interest.