Reviewer's report

Title: Improving capacity for evidence-based practice in South East Asia: evaluating the role of research fellowships in the SEA-ORCHID Project

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Reviewer: angela mary M tod

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
This paper is a clear presentation of an evaluation of the SEA-ORCHID Fellowship Programme. It is well structured and clearly written.
The main question is the relevance of this intervention and evaluation to other countries. I can see it would be of interest but more effort could be made to emphasise relevance to an International audience. (Discretionary Revision)
It is still unclear what criteria were used to select Fellows. What criteria were used to identify those who "were or had potential to be leaders and champions for practice change". (Essential revision)

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The evaluation and its methods are straightforward and descriptive. Some more detail of how the qualitative data was analysed would be valuable. The implication is that NVIVO was used to analyse the data. This should be revised to clarify that such software is used to manage, store and search the qualitative data. What sort of thematic analysis was used? Was it a systematic and rigorous process? (Compulsory revisions)

3. Are the data sound?
The authors highlight that those involved in delivering, co-ordinating and supporting the education also conducted the interviews. They note this could create impartiality. Were any steps taken to address this or reduce possible bias? (Discretionary revision)

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?
Two issues that merit further discussion were
* The EBP training that was developed and activity to support EBP and develop infrastructure to promote EBP (e.g. journal clubs) were not really discussed. Was there any evidence of impact of these? What was the potential for developing this area of activity in future fellowship schemes? Findings on outputs focus more on
SR and CPGs. (Discretionary revision)
* The main barrier was time, and access to equipment and resource back at their workplace. The implications for this on future fellowships is not really discussed. What lessons can be learnt? e.g. Should provision of these resources be criteria for selection of the Fellows? How can the outputs be structured in such a way as to support future EBP and fellowship activity? This links to the previous point. By Fellows from earlier schemes helping to develop infrastructure and culture to promote EBP, this will help productivity of future fellows. Can the discussion pick up on these issues? (Discretionary revisions)

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes but see point above about potential bias in the interviews

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?
Yes

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'