Reviewer’s report

Title: How to set up and manage a trainee-led research collaborative

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Reviewer: Robin Urquhart

Reviewer’s report:

Overall, an interesting paper and I agree with the authors concluding statement that it is important to publish learnings related to setting up and managing research collaboratives so that we can collectively learn from and develop best practices.

Minor essential revisions

1. Please introduce the WMRC before the section “How to manage a research collaborative so that it delivers high quality research projects” (page 6). I would suggest the best place would be in the purpose statement (“In this article we will discuss…”) on the previous page.

2. Page 6, Paragraph 1: I am uncertain by what the authors meant by “interest is not a problem”. Do they mean that all trainee doctors have a high interest in research? If so, I would argue this is not always the case and that sometimes interest is a challenge. Thus, I recommend the authors clarify this part of the sentence and/or revise and/or omit. Similarly, on page 6, first paragraph of section “How to manage a research collaborative …”, the authors state that “the commitment of trainee doctors to engage in high quality research projects is unlikely to be an issue…” I would say this is mostly accurate if those trainee doctors are in a setting (“culture”) that actively supports, undertakes, and rewards research. This may not be the case in all institutions. Therefore, I wonder if the authors can revise or reframe this sentence with this caveat.

3. Page 6, Paragraph 3: Please descriptively introduce Box 1 in the article’s text.

4. Related to the section “How to manage a research collaborative …”, please align the phrasing of the article text with the phrasing used for each of the elements in Box 2. For example, on page 7, the authors use the phrase “National endorsement and encouragement” but the corresponding Box element reads “National recognition.” This will improve the organization and readability of the article.

5. Page 8, Paragraph 2: Beginning at Paragraph 2 (“In any research project, various tasks…”), the authors switch from describing the successful elements of managing the WMRC to literature on team work and team dynamics. I found this switch to be confusing as a reader. To enhance readability/organization, please either indicate this change with a new heading or sub-heading, or move the literature discussion/description elsewhere.
6. Page 9: Please include a statement(s) in the article text to introduce Box 3.

Discretionary revisions

7. Some medical schools in North America (e.g., Scholarly Project at the University of Pittsburgh, Research in Medicine Program at Dalhousie University) have established programs wherein a formal longitudinal research curriculum (with mentors, etc) is a required part of the undergraduate medical education. Given the authors’ experiences with the WMRC, I would be interested in their perspectives on the weaknesses and benefits of a research collaborative (as a means of education/training) versus formally integrating a research component in undergraduate or post-graduate education/training programs.

8. I believe it would greatly improve the article if the authors would identify and discuss some of the challenges they experienced during the WMRC start-up (specifically in the section “How to establish a research collaborative”). While the authors discuss some literature in this section, I believe identifying and discussing some of their own challenges and how they managed or overcame them would prove a valuable contribution.

9. Page 7, Paragraph 2: I am uncertain as to whether “figurehead” is the correct term to convey what the authors are describing. Would “mentor” perhaps be a better term for this element?

Minor issues not for publication

10. Abstract, Discussion section: omit “they” between “why” and “research collaborative”; omit “science” between “quality” and “research projects”

11. Page 4, Paragraph 1: I would suggest toning down the language when stating that “some trainees ‘suffer’ a period of research ….” I am not sure they are truly suffering.

12. Page 4, Paragraph 1: Please change “For those that do wish …” to “For those who do wish …”

13. Page 7, Paragraph 3: Please spell out the acronym MRC (Medical Research Council) for an international audience. Same goes for NHS on the following page.

14. Page 7, Paragraph 3: Change “admin” to “administrative”

15. Box 2: Keep the punctuation following each element consistent (that is, either period or colon).

16. Box 2: I do not understand the first statement in the element termed “Shared benefits” – “All those consenting/assessing patients are credited in final papers.” Patients?? Also, isn’t this element about sharing recognition/co-authorship amongst participating investigators?
17. Box 2, Element 4: Add a period after “giving credit”

**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.