Author's response to reviews

Title: Developing a web-based information resource for palliative care: An action-research inspired approach

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Version: 3 Date: 2 May 2007

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

Title: Developing a web-based information resource for palliative care: An action-research inspired approach

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Version: 2
Date: 12 April 2007
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Melbourne, 2 May 2007

Melissa Norton, MD
Medical Editor
BioMed Central

Re: Developing a web-based information resource for palliative care: An action-research inspired approach (previously entitled Identifying online information needs for a palliative care website: An action-research inspired approach)

Dear Melissa Norton,

Thank you for consideration of our manuscript for publication in your journal.
We have reviewed the above manuscript according to your reviewer’s comments.

Regards,

Goetz Ottmann
Reviewer's report

Title: Identifying online information needs for a palliative care website: An action-research-inspired approach

Version: 1 Date: 6 March 2007
Reviewer: David Currow

Reviewer's report:
Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The issue of consumer involvement in website development is clearly an important issue, but not new.
Likewise, the issue of consumer involvement in developing palliative care websites is not new, but it is not well documented in the literature and as such this paper has the potential to add to this area.

Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
The methods are not well defined. The literature review is not at all defined, and there are some significant omissions from even the quoted literature around key issues in websites.

//The method section has been significantly expanded setting out the methodology more clearly. Studies relevant to the methodology have been included.

The features of "health on the net" are not expanded in order for an international audience to understand what is occurring there.

//'Health on the Net‘ has been defined and explained in the text.

There is no definition of how the literature review was achieved.

//A section outlining the methodology underpinning the literature review has been added.

Given that the audience for the website is changing through this project (a key issue that is not dealt with by the authors) the limitations of the online survey (current users) is not outlined at all.

//Limitations arising from the fact that the audience of the online survey is changing over the course of the project has been addressed in the Discussion section.

The needs identification is cursory in the outline in the methods.

This is a descriptive study where the descriptions particularly are of the results in Stage 1 (the literature review) are not adequate. There needs to be a robust discussion about the literature that has been accessed.

//A section outlining the key findings of the literature review has been added.
The needs identification is limited and really not strongly cross-referenced to either the existing audience or the subsequent audience. Most disappointingly, for a project that started in 2003 there is no closure of the loop saying that the changes to the website have actually improved access either for the professionals (who appeared reasonably happy with the website the way it was) nor for the potential audience of new users. As such the publication of this in a health informatics journal is questionable.

//In order to address these interrelated issues, the findings from a subsequent online survey (not included in the original manuscript) measuring responses to the new website have been added.

Are the discussions and conclusion well balanced? The discussion really fails to identify how this project (and this appears not to be a research project) discusses the limitations of either the existing website, the new website, limitation in process nor limitations in design. There is no critique of how things would be done differently, nor indeed the future directions that this research should take.

//These issues have been addressed in the Discussion section.

Do the title and abstract convey what has been found? The title does not adequately describe what has occurred.

//The title has been changed to reflect more precisely the content of the paper.

The information needs both from the literature and from the focus groups is not well described. Is the writing adequate? Yes

Overall I think there are some major compulsory revisions that need to occur for this to be acceptable for publication.

The literature review needs to identify literature in the review and for the literature that was not used.

//We were not entirely sure how to translate this comment into a recommendation. As mentioned above, we included the key outcomes of the literature review and included more studies supporting our approach in the methodology section.

The use of expert groups as opposed to focus groups needs to be addressed in the text.

//Having outlined the approach/methodology more clearly, the logic behind the way we used reference working groups, focus groups, as well as expert groups should be clearer. Also, the role of these groups has been explained in greater detail in the manuscript.
More than anything else. I believe the paper would be strengthened greatly by user acceptability and information that the processes that have been undertaken by the project team have actually lead to an improved website that is meeting the more complex needs of people more effectively.

//New data compiled from an online survey evaluating the new website clearly demonstrates that consumers are more satisfied with the new website. The data has been added to the Results and Discussion section.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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'
Reviewer's report
Title: Identifying online information needs for a palliative care website: An action-research-inspired approach
Version: 1 Date: 28 February 2007
Reviewer: Ronda Hughes

Reviewer's report:

General
Why there is no disagreement that accurate information about palliative and end-of-life care information is not readily accessible for many clinicians, patients and lay caregivers, it is not clear whether this study truly addressed that concern, or mainly focused on refining a website that would have continued limited use.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Background
-Please define what were the global policy issues targeted by this project.

//The section dealing policy issues has been revised.

Methods
-Since it is possible to gather how many 'hits' there were to the website, stating that the response rate could not be determined is not acceptable and puts the significance of the findings in jeopardy.

//Although we agree with the reviewer in spirit, we are constrained by the fact that the project was contracted by a government agency. The current owner of the website claims that data outlining 'hits' are not available. However, the inclusion of data from the post-development survey strengthens the overall argument of the article.

-It is more important to state what types of questions were included in the survey then it is to say that the survey was written in HTML.

//The sentence stating that the survey was written in HTML was deleted. An outline of the questions posted in the online survey has been added.

-Were the members of the 'working party' representative of the population that would be accessing the website for information? How were the members selected?

//A detailed description of how the working parties were recruited has been added.

-What process was involved in selecting the information that would be posted on the website? Was the new information more evidence-based? Were systematic reviews included as evidence?
An outline of the data selection process as well as the methodology employed to ensure that the content of the site is based on ‘best available evidence’ has been added.

What were the qualifications of the investigators to determine the quality of the evidence to be used? Were the study investigators qualified to conduct this study? Was an interdisciplinary research team used?

An overview of the professional qualifications of researchers and contributors has been added.

Results
- What questions(s) were not responded to on the survey? Any type of pattern?

A sentence has been added explaining that the last two (open ended) questions of the survey were often left blank.

-Seems that non-clinician use of the website was low. Do you know why?

No, none of the surveys addressed this question. As the post-development survey demonstrates this trend persists. However, the number of nurses utilising the site as a resource has increased. Anecdotal evidence suggests that health professionals would prefer a more direct access to the data and a reduction of levels of sub-menus that currently organise the data. However, this is not born out by the post-development survey.

-Seems like the website tried to accomplish too much...providing information vs. providing employment opportunities vs. course information. Wouldn't it be important to define the scope of the website, making it clear what would/would not be included?

The scope of the website was defined early on in the development process. A sentence to this end has been added.

-Did website users access palliative care information through other websites? If so, which ones, and what was/was not offered on those websites that users were seeking information about?

None of our survey/focus group questions addressed this issue (we bear this in mind for future reference).

-For Table 1 & 2, the 3rd column is missing a heading. What is the sample size reflected in each table?

Headings and sample sizes have been added.

Discussion
How did you get from Tables 1 & 2, the the list of gaps in this section? Are these listed by the frequency of identified gaps?

//A more detailed explanation of how the various committees and working groups translated the findings into a gap analysis has been added.

The mention that the study took place over 3 years should appear in the methods section, and not the discussion section. Why did the study take that long?

//Various administrative issues, such the negotiation of the funding contract, as well as staff turnover of key contributors significantly delayed the project (for instance, the initial negotiation phase lasted for 6 months). However, these issues as not directly relevant to the argument put forward in the article have not been mentioned. Moreover, because the study, by and large, relied on the contributions of volunteers, most of which were busy clinicians, caused other delays. This factor is mentioned in the article.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Background
- Instead of 'carers', would be more appropriate to use 'caregivers'.

//The term ‘carers’ has been changed for ‘caregivers’ (Although both terms are used interchangeably in Australia).

Following the list of references, there is Table 1: Evaluation of original website. It is unclear what the authors are trying to accomplish by presenting this table.

//The section has been redrafted and the table deleted.

Additionally, 2 pages later, there is another Table 1. The authors should be more careful in presenting pertinent information in their manuscript.

//The numbering has been corrected.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions Level of interest: An article of limited interest Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published Statistical review:

Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Reviewer's report
Identifying online information needs for a palliative care website: An action-Title: research-inspired approach

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2007
Reviewer: Suzanne Dickerson

Reviewer's report:
General
This paper is well done. The method and results are very appropriate to meet the needs of this constituency. This approach is sensitive and targeted to the perceived needs of both health care providers, patients and caregivers in palliative care situations.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The reader would benefit from more explanation of the method. Citing the texts does not provide enough detail.

//The methods section has been revised and a more detailed overview is given.

In particular the reader would like to know what criteria were used and how your choose and recruited the stakeholders.

//An overview of how the stakeholder groups were recruited has been added.

Also needed is the format of the focus groups, what general questions were asked, how was the information processed, analyzed or evaluated, and who moderated?

//An outline of the questions raised in focus groups has been added. Also a sentence was added explaining the format of these focus groups.

Was the final content decided by consensus? What did you do when the groups had different views and disagreed? For example, when providers and carers disagreed on what is the appropriate information needed, or did they always agree? How did you decide on the content and sources of the evidence based reports? This is important to assure that everyone’s view was considered.

//An overview of how conflicting views were mediated has been added. Also, a more detailed description of how decisions were made has been included.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** 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 interests