Author's response to reviews

Title: Conceptual and practical challenges for implementing the communities of practice model on a national scale: a Canadian cancer control initiative

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Version: 3 Date: 6 November 2009

Author's response to reviews: see over
November 6, 2009

Nina Titmus  
Scientific Editor  
BMC-series Journals  
BioMed Central

Dear Nina Titmus:

Attached please find our revised manuscript, entitled “Conceptual and practical challenges for implementing the communities of practice model on a national scale: a Canadian cancer control initiative.” The manuscript is for consideration in BMC Health Services Research, and intended for the Debate section of the journal.

I have attached 2 copies of the revised manuscript: one clean copy, and one copy showing all revisions using MSWord Track Changes function. An Authors’ contributions section has been added.

The reviewers’ reports were valuable in helping us refine the argument of the manuscript, enhance its quality, and broaden its audience appeal. Attached is a point-by-point response to the concerns raised by each reviewer.

Almost all revisions requested by the reviewers were incorporated into the final manuscript; however, two revisions requested by Charmaine McPherson were not adopted in the final manuscript. They are: 1) the request to remove all quotation marks with no direct reference, and 2) to include more examples of CoPs beyond the cancer care domain. My co-authors and I respectfully acknowledge these concerns, and provide our reasons for not revising the manuscript accordingly in our point-by-point response below.

In the process of revising the manuscript, we have made additional stylistic changes. These include: 1) deleting information irrelevant to the manuscript’s argument; 2) changing “conceptual fuzziness” to “lack of clarity” in reference to Wenger’s concept; and 3) tightening sentence structures to pare down the manuscript’s discursive style.

My co-authors and I appreciate the reviewers’ comments, which we feel have improved the quality of the manuscript. We are grateful for the careful attention they have given it.

Best regards,

Colene Bentley
Reviewer's report

Title: Conceptual and practical challenges for implementing the communities of practice model on a national scale: a Canadian cancer control initiative

Version: 1 Date: 17 June 2009

Reviewer: Nicola Andrew

Reviewer's report:
This article is interesting, well written and engages the reader from the outset. The content serves to further demonstrate the use of CoPs as a viable tool for the generation and transfer of health knowledge and promotion of clinical leadership. The research into the use of CoPs as a tool for healthcare practice and innovation has expanded over the past five-ten years, from a point when it was a virtually unknown business/organisational development based concept, to present day status where it is now commonly used (and at times perhaps overused) terminology in health care education and practice. I think that this article does add to the body of knowledge around the use and purpose of CoPs in health care however it is mainly presented as a critique of this approach and not, as the current title suggests, the specific implementation of the CPAC CoP which really is only represented by a couple of paragraphs at the end of the piece.

I would advise a re-visitation of the end section perhaps to provide additional material around the specifics of the CPAC CoP as this is likely to increase both educational and discipline specific readership. I think currently this article is a good critique of CoPs generally and Wenger specifically (and there are quite a lot of these already in the literature), however the inclusion and expansion of case studies and examples from practice really will really lift the work from its current status, enhance the quality if the piece and potentially engage a wider audience as a result. We have added more specifics of the CPAC CoP Project to the final section of the manuscript. This includes information on the tools the Project has designed and will test on collaborative groups involved in cancer guideline adaptation and synoptic reporting in cancer surgery. These examples from practice, and the development of the toolkit, will be of interest to a wider audience.

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
Reviewer's report

Title: Conceptual and practical challenges for implementing the communities of practice model on a national scale: a Canadian cancer control initiative

Version: 1 Date: 13 July 2009

Reviewer: Charmaine McPherson

Reviewer's report:

1. Does the debate present a novel argument, or a novel insight into existing work?
Yes, the authors present timely and novel arguments on this issue. They build nicely on existing work. This is an important debate that should quickly reach a broader audience through publication.

2. Does the debate address an important problem of interest to a broad biomedical audience?
This issue should be of interest for a broad biomedical audience, although the authors do not necessarily position it as such. I have made a suggestion regarding broadening references to include more diverse applications, which should broaden the audience of interest. Our response also applies to the reviewer’s comment #39, below., and applies to the final section of the manuscript. In discussions with my co-authors, we do not believe that including more information on more CoPs in health care would significantly advance the manuscript’s argument or scope; in fact, we believe that generating further examples CoPs in health care would detract from the paper’s main focus. Instead, in the final section of the manuscript we have provided more information on our CoP Project. This includes references to the collaborative entities the CoP Project is currently evaluating using Wenger’s concept, and the toolkit we have developed to perform that evaluation. We feel that more specifics on the CoP Project and its implementation is likely to increase readership interest.

3. Is the piece well argued and referenced?
Yes, the paper is well argued and referenced, with the noted exceptions regarding the introduction of network terminology without sufficient argumentation (see #4 that follows), and the need for more paper structure in terms of introductory section paragraphs throughout. Use of network terminology has been eliminated from the revised manuscript, with exception of Wenger et al.’s explanation of the distinction between CoPs and networks (see “Idea of community” section of revised manuscript).

4. Has the author used logical arguments and sound reasoning?
a) Page 8, idea of community section, 1st sentence: introduce an argument regarding terminology that is not fully flushed out. Why does the term “network” not suggest strong ties of mutual engagement and accountability, etc.? Suggest adding a bit to this paragraph to strengthen your argument—it is left hanging here. The phrase “strong ties of mutual engagement and accountability” has been deleted. Distinctions between the terms “network” and “community of practice” have been clarified by referencing 1) Wenger’s own explanation of the distinction; and 2) international studies scholar Benedict Anderson’s influential work on “imagined communities,” which argues that the sense of belonging to a community is of a piece with our capacity to imagine others as compatriots, and to identify emotionally with them. These points have been
added to the revised manuscript under the “Idea of community” section. Wenger borrows from Anderson’s work explicitly in *Communities of Practice* (1998).

b) Page 10, para 2: introduce a coupling of CoP/Network… but how does this fit with the earlier arguments on page 8 that were unfinished? The title of the CoP/Network Project has been modified to the CoP Project.

c) Overall, mixing of theoretical language: “Wenger’s approach” “Wenger’s concept”; suggest reread entire paper and seek clarity around these issues vis-à-vis generally accepted social science terminology, given the connection to social science theory outlined in the paper. References to Wenger’s approach have been eliminated. Terminology has been changed to Wenger’s concept and Wenger’s model.

5. Is the piece written well enough for publication? (nb. Since we do not charge for access to published research, we cannot undertake the costs of editing poorly written manuscript. If you tell us that the writing is not acceptable for publication, we will ask the authors to find someone, or an editing service, to help them rewrite it. If you tell us that the manuscript is too poorly written for it to be peer reviewed, we will ask them to rewrite it now.)

This manuscript needs a thorough edit. I have offered many suggestions regarding the common errors that I see. It makes it difficult to read the paper when the flow is constantly interrupted by awkward sentence structure and such. However, I hope that I have provided sufficient detailed feedback so that the authors could quickly deal with these issues. The authors present a novel argument and critique of an important and timely theoretical issue and this should not be overshadowed by the required editing.

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Reviewer's report

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Page 4, 2nd para: by now I have read several instances where the authors refer to Wenger’s work, where, in fact, it is Wenger and colleagues under reference [1]. Since attribution is a very serious issue, strongly suggest that authors review entire paper scanning for this error and make appropriate adjustments. *Wenger et al. and Wenger and colleagues have been inserted to show correct attribution where applicable.*

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Page 3, first paragraph under CoP definition: usually do not refer to location of a passage (“above/below”); also redundant to refer to “the book” per se because it is already referenced under [1]—this can all be indicated in a cleaner sentence structure such as: “Wenger and colleagues’ communities of practice definition captures what they refer to as…..” *Paragraph has been edited to reflect these concerns.*
marks with no direct reference to source or page #, plse reference correctly Quotation marks have not been removed because these quotations are taken verbatim from Wenger et al.’s definition of a community of practice provided at the beginning of the Background section. The definition itself is already referenced in the manuscript. The point of this part of the paper is to employ close reading practice (also known as formalist reading) from the humanities and social science disciplines to interpret Wenger et al.’s definition, and to relate it to their other statements on the CoP concept. One purpose of close reading practice is to take writers ‘at their word,’ so to speak, and to focus on textual evidence so as to avoid motivated interpretations by readers. For this reason, we quote heavily from Wenger and Wenger et al. in this section and throughout the paper. Also, few articles on Wenger’s concept employ close reading as interpretive practice, and we believe employing it adds rigour to our analysis. Page numbers are not used because it is not standard practice in BMC Health Services Research.

3. Within first two pages have frequently used parentheses within text to enclose additional material, which is distracting for the reader. Generally, use of parentheses should be limited to necessary issues only, such as introducing an abbreviation or setting off structurally independent elements (e.g., (see Figure 5)). Suggest the authors examine their sentences that contain unnecessary parentheses and restructure sentences to eliminate the parentheses. We have eliminated all unnecessary parentheses.

4. Page 3, 2nd para after CoP definition: …They are also “passionate” about it….Use of double quotation marks; does not fit with standard guidelines for use—not a verbatim passage, a title, or slang/coined term. The paper is littered with this inappropriate use of double marks, which is also distracting for the reader—suggest examine use of double quotation marks throughout paper and adjust. “Passionate” is Wenger’s term, not ours. See our response to item 2, above. In the rest of the manuscript, inappropriate use of double quotation marks has been eliminated.

5. Page 4, 1st para, last sentence: awkward sentence structure; suggest reformat. The sentence break has been removed, but as this is a direct textual quote, it cannot be further revised.

6. Page 4, 3rd para: variations in use of italics and double quotation marks for word emphasis with word community. The italics is correct and double quotation marks is incorrect (see #4 here as well). Distracts from flow and important content. Also, once introduce term once in italics, should cease using it for that term thereafter. Unnecessary double quotation marks and italics have been eliminated. Double quotation marks are now only used when directly quoting text.

7. Page 4, para 4: tense when referring to sources; standard form is to use past tense…”Wenger and colleagues said that….”; review entire paper for this issue. Changes to reflect past tense have been made throughout manuscript.

8. Page 4, para 4: overuse of dashes to indicate a sudden interruption in the continuity of the sentence. This overuse weakens the flow of the material. Suggest review entire paper and minimize use of dashes to most important material only. Use of dashes has been minimized throughout manuscript.
9. Page 4, para 5: use of CoP abbreviation without properly introducing it using parentheses first (see #3 comment in this section). The use of CoP as an abbreviation was introduced prior to its usage at this point in the paper. See the Abstract section, and the second paragraph of the Background section.

10. Page 4, para 5, 1st sentence: rework sentence structure to eliminate “however” dangling at end. “However” has been moved to the beginning of the sentence.

11. Page 4, para 5, 2nd sentence: awkward structure—rework. The sentence has been reworked to remove structural awkwardness.

12. Page 4, para 5, last sentence: awkward structure..."Throughout"...; also inappropriate use of double quotation mark around new terms introduced; italicize as noted in comment #6 here. Italics have been added in place of quotation marks, and sentence edited.

13. Page 4, para 5: introduces an overview of what the authors are going to be discussing herein. An introductory paragraph is missing from page 2 between the abstract and background sections. Adding an introductory paragraph there would inform the reader about the paper structure and how all sections are tied together. Suggest adding this on page 2 and adjusting para 5 on page 4 to fit this new format. This paragraph has been place under “The need to collaborate” so as to inform the reader of the paper’s structure. BMC format does not allow for text between Abstract and Background sections.

14. Page 5, para 2, 2nd sentence: check material in parentheses for guidelines—turn into another sentence—“here” is left hanging in sentence with punctuation error. Material has been added to explain Stanley Fish’s influential idea of “interpretive communities.”

15. Page 5, 2nd para, last sentence: use of author’s full name several times now in paper. Convention suggests that should avoid frequent use of this. In this instance, it breaks up a verbatim quotation, which disrupts the flow for the reader. Full name has been eliminated, and sentence edited for flow.

16. Page 5, 3rd para: No ned to cite full name of study because it is in the reference list. Also, it was the study authors who reported the results (not that “the study found that...”), Title of study eliminated. Edits have been made to reflect that study authors report results, except in instances where such changes result in unwieldy sentence structure.

17. Page 6, para 2, 1st sentence: check sentence structure (eliminate use of dash) and final comment structure:.....in the hands of practitioners, not managers..... Parentheses have been eliminated, and comma added.
18. Page 6, para 2, 2nd last sentence: do not start sentence with “And” The word “And” has been replaced with “moreover.”

19. Page 6, para 1 under Limitations section: switch tense to past tense here…Critics have focused…; see comment # 7 here. The past tense is used.

20. Page 6, para 1 under Limitations section, 3rd sentence: poor sentence structure; last sentence in paragraph also awkward in structure. Minor edits have been made for clarity. Otherwise, there are no grammatical errors in these sentences.

21. Page 7, para 1, last sentence: suggest not starting sentence with “But” “But” has been replaced with “however,” and sentence modified.

22. Page 6: strongly suggest that include an introductory paragraph outlining the subsections that will follow under the Limitations section. By page 7 it is reading as an unanticipated listing, esp when start with subsections under conceptual fuzziness. The beginning of the Limitations section has been revised to include an introductory paragraph and itemize the subsections to follow.

23. Page 7, conceptual fuzziness section, 1st sentence: run-on sentence; break into 2 sentences The first sentence is not a run-on sentence. The second sentence has been separated into two sentences.

24. Page 7, conceptual fuzziness section, last sentence: these are not “definitions” rather they are aspects of the conceptual description; also, end of sentence structure—lack of parallel construction… “of what communities of practice really are or what they can do.” The term “definitions” has been changed to “aspects of Wenger’s concept.” The last 5 words have been eliminated from the sentence.

25. Page 7: again, introduce reader to the subsections that will follow under Conceptual Fuzziness at outset. The need to introduce the reader to subsections that will follow was addressed in item 22.

26. Page 8, para 1, last sentence: too long, break into smaller components. Also, check conventions on writing out digits for timeframes, i.e., 20th century Sentence has been separated into two sentences. We could not locate BMC conventions for writing out timeframes. Written and numeric dates have been used in past BMC articles.

27. Page 8, para 2, last sentence is too long—break down. Sentence has been broken down to two sentences.

28. Page 8, para 3, 2nd sentence: not parallel in constrution (before and after
29. Page 9, para 1, 2nd sentence: lack of parallelism; “Their members meet online and face-to-face, and they can number in the hundreds.” Sentence has been rewritten, and a new sentence added to remedy lack of parallelism.

30. Page 9, KT section start, 3rd sentence: lack of parallelism … “enhancing collective knowhow to encompassing collective action.” Sentence has been rewritten for clarity.

31. Page 9, KT section start, 4th sentence: run-on/too long sentence—separate out after Quebec. Sentence has been separated into two sentences.

32. Page 9, KT section start, 5th sentence: no need for quotation marks. “intensity…outcomes” Quotation marks have been removed.

33. Page 9, KT section start, last sentence: word missing?… “interest in the processes of decision…” The word “the” has been added.

34. page 9, last paragraph: need to properly reference CHAIN when introduce it in the first sentence (esp since there’s the UK chain and the Canadian equivalent now). The UK has been added.

35. Page 10, para1, 1st sentence: check sentence structure—run-on and not parallel The sentence has been divided into two sentences.

36. Page 10, para 1, last sentence: poorly structured sentence that distracts from the point the authors are trying to make. The sentence has been divided into two sentences, with appropriate grammatical changes.

37. Page 10, Next section (Canadian context), 1st sentence: addressing which questions? I assume the questions posed in previous section, but nee to further cue the reader—addressing the questions posed surrounding levels, etc etc Sentence has been rewritten to clarify which questions are being referred to.

38. Page 10, para 2, 4th sentence: mixing tenses in same sentence…. “in the course of…it became apparent that…did not go very far…” Verb tenses have been changed so that they are consistent.

39. Page 10, para 3, 1st sentence: consider adding further more diverse examples beyond the cancer care domain—check many public health examples—since the statement is a broad one about Canadian health care in general. See our response to item 2 in this report.
40. Page 11, summary paragraph, 3rd sentence: use of “like” is colloquial. The word “like” has been changed to the phrase “such as.”

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.