Reviewer's report

Title: Does the process map influence the outcome of quality improvement work? A comparison of a sequential flow diagram and a hierarchical task analysis diagram

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Reviewer: Melody Rhydderch

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I think that this article is innovative, integrating as it does research from human factors and cognitive science traditions with the QI literature.

The research question is important and relevant as QI methods and approaches should be evaluated for their validity and reliability in contributing to identification and management of likely problem areas. I thought the method was appropriate to the aim and the authors identify areas for future research. Due to the centrality of team working to the success of quality improvement initiatives, a method that includes a team based approach would be important to consider for future work.

Given that existing research suggests that the way information is presented influences the ways it is perceived and processed by individuals, it is not surprising that both tools illuminate similar and different aspects of the quality process. The discussion is well structured and thoughtful and I think the view that it is important to use more than one approach is an important one.

It reminded me of the assessment centre literature where, the validity of the process increases substantially by combining different approaches to problem solving. The challenge seems to be in identifying when a tool is weak in representing the issue under study and this may be disguised by to an extent by arguing that similar tools or approaches are revealing slightly different aspects of quality issues under study.