Reviewer's report

Title: Benefits and problems of electronic information exchange as perceived by health care professionals: an interview study

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Reviewer: Nigel Armfield

Reviewer's report:

This is well motivated work which aims to understand clinicians' perceptions of electronic information exchange. As the authors describe, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) gives only limited insight into the problem and they aimed to delve deeper to understand the issues of lower than desired acceptance. This is a well known problem and an important one to solve.

While a research question is not explicitly stated, the intent of the work is clear. The authors took a qualitative approach and collected data by interview. They subsequently performed a thematic analysis. This seems appropriate.

17 interviews were conducted. The authors did not describe how the participants were selected. In addition, the authors stated that they used a predetermined topic list - it would be useful for this to be included in the paper together with a list of the interview questions.

The basic characteristics of the participants are described in Table 2 however it would be useful to also know what exposure each participant had to electronic interchange/n-EPR. For instance, opinions of a user with limited exposure are likely to be different to those of a user with considerable exposure.

The paper offers more insight than would be gleaned by the TAM. There are probably still other important professional/sociological/psychological factors deeply underlying the findings - such as the reluctance for clinicians to change their established way of practice. This may present itself superficially for instance as concerns about efficiency/safety/effectiveness of electronic methods. While it is challenging to get to the basis of the problem, without an understanding of the underlying dynamics it is difficult to make effective recommendations.

The paper discusses the various approaches to top-down/bottom up development - it would be useful to know what change management processes were used during development and implementation since they would be of relevance to clinician acceptance.

Overall, the paper is interesting and well written. There are points that should to be clarified regarding the methodology and suggestions are provided below. In addition to questions about the methodology, the study was rather small and this may limit its significance and generalisability. The authors do acknowledge
generalisability limitations. This would could/should form the basis for a larger study to explore the issues at a greater level of depth.

Specific suggested points for consideration follow:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Please include a statement on how participants were selected.
2. Please include information on the predetermined topic list / interview questions.
3. Please include information on degree of exposure to electronic data interchange/n-EPR for each participant in Table 2.
4. While not investigated by the study, I'd suggest including some discussion regarding the underlying dynamics of health professionals and their acceptance of change/technological change.
5. I'd make some reference to the change management that has/hasn't occurred during the development/implementation of electronic data interchange/n-EPR and discuss it's relevance.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. For the non-Dutch reader, please introduce the UZI before referring to it.

Discretionary Revisions

Nil

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