Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding evidence-based decision making capacity at the state and local levels: a survey of chronic disease practitioners

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Reviewer: Lucie Rychetnik

Reviewer's report:

This survey of chronic disease practitioners of the knowledge and skills required for EBP has been rigorously conducted using a previously tested instrument. The findings reinforce and replicate findings from previous similar surveys.

While I can see there is some value in describing the current status of EBM preparedness (albeit self-reported) among the public health workforce in this way, particularly as potential baseline data for evaluating subsequent workforce development, I do think there are serious limitations in the value of repeating such surveys among different populations.

Primarily, the paper does not provide any empirical explanations for the results, or sufficient contextual details that would inform interpretation of the findings or help others with planning an effective intervention. Other than providing some form of generic training which may not actually impact on the real barriers to evidence-based practice. It may be that other complementary interview or observational data were obtained but are not described here, eg about decision making processes and organisational and cultural and political influences etc - but without that kind of information I must admit I found the survey results rather dry and somewhat devoid of meaning in terms of assisting me to think about the 'how' and 'why' of gaps it describes.

Thus while I appreciate the rigour of the process, other than as a reproduced survey of an already known problem, I am rather uncertain of the value of the findings. I would like to see less text listing detailed statistics (which are adequately presented in the figures and tables) and more focus on the context in which the survey was conducted, the nature of the workforce and context in which they work, and more from the authors in terms of the interpretation and explanation of their results.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
no competing interests