Reviewer's report

Title: Aboriginal-mainstream partnerships: Exploring the challenges and enhancers of a collaborative service arrangement for Aboriginal clients with substance use issues

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Reviewer: Komla Tsey

Reviewer's report:

1. Minor Essential Revisions
   A couple of typos to be fixed

2. Discretionary Revisions
   The issue of inter-agency partnerships, or organisations working together to improve the health and wellbeing of the populations that they serve, is at the centre of the Primary Health Care approach, at least since Alma Atta. All over the world, national and local health policies and programs thus emphasise the importance of partnerships (and indeed the related notions of community engagement, capacity building, program sustainability and transferability, etc.). Unfortunately, these are also the aspects of health service organisations that are least understood due to poor resourcing and lack of research. This paper addresses an important gap in the health services research literature. It examines a state imposed partnership arrangement between an Aboriginal Australian community controlled alcohol service and three mainstream alcohol treatment agencies designed to improve service access for Aboriginal clients.

The paper is well written. The rationale, research questions, methods, findings are all presented and discussed. There's one structural weakness in the paper which I will encourage the authors to address. The authors need to decide from the outset whether the current paper is simply reporting the findings of the semi structured interviews regarding participants' perceptions of the partnership experience or a full account of a participatory action research (PAR) process designed to assist participants critically reflect, develop understanding and hence better manage what was obviously a challenging partnership process. My sense is that the latter- a PAR process (which is not introduced until after the findings under the sections on Partnerships Forums and Outcome) is another paper in its own. If the former, the all that the authors need to do is to mention only briefly that the reported findings were part of a broader participatory action research hopefully to be reported elsewhere. The way PAR is introduced in the current version breaks the flow of an otherwise well written paper.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests