Reviewer's report

Title: Structure and governance of health and welfare systems relevant to diabetes self-management: a realist review to facilitate a European Project implemented in six countries

Version: 2 Date: 27 May 2014

Reviewer: Andrew Gray

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript sets out a realistic review of the literature around diabetes self-management. It seems to be comprehensive and I didn't notice any substantial omissions in terms of studies. The interpretations seemed sound. It was a pleasure to read and I found it useful in thinking about how future interventions could be designed in this area. I should note that my areas of research are biostatistics, which has involved some work involving diabetes, so my focus for this review has been in those areas rather than health systems.

My comments are a few suggestions for additional information and a small number of typos that the authors should be able to correct easily enough.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions
None

Discretionary Revisions
1. I would suggest that the authors follow the convention of writing numbers as words when these are ten or less (e.g., “6” several times on page 3 and elsewhere).

2. I'd also suggest adding the capitalised definite article before “United Kingdom” and “Netherlands”. This isn’t done in the abstract, for example, but the latter is given as “The Netherlands” at some places in the body of the manuscript (e.g., page 17) and in an uncapitalised form on page 18.

3. The order of the countries in the abstract (page 3) doesn’t match the order on page six under “The EU-WISE Project” or page 7 in the first list item. In all cases, the last list item should be preceded by “and”.

4. The term “salient visible” isn’t a word combination I’ve encountered before. While I could understand its intention, perhaps different wording would be useful for the reader?

5. Hyphens are inconsistently used for “meso-level” (present in the abstract, page 3; but not on page 6). Perhaps a quick search for these?

6. A spurious comma following “EU project” on page 7.
7. Second list item on page 7, suggest adding “chronic disease management [in general] and diabetes in particular”

8. Spurious space before hyphen in list item 3 on page 8.

9. Suggest adding “skill mix [and the] role of” to list item 5 on page 8.

10. In terms of information resources, I wonder if the authors could justify not using Google Scholar. This may be useful in identifying grey literature, which a review such as this ought to be able to make good use of.

11. Typo on page 11 in “their findings we[re] reproduced?”

12. Spurious formal on page 11 in “to supplement formal the formal critical appraisal”

13. The point on page 14–15 about locally developed education programmes being less effective was interesting and I wonder if the authors could add some comments (even if speculative) as to why this might be the case?

14. There were a few issues with possessive apostrophes, both missing, e.g., “God’s will” on page 15, and “professional’s” and “patient’s” on page 16, and spurious, e.g., in “patients’ belonging to either” on page 16.

15. “Internet” should be capitalised (e.g., page 20).

16. I think 52% on page 23 would be better described as “over half of…” rather than “a significant percentage of…”

17. On page 24, “strive” should be “striving”.

18. I would suggest that an additional limitation would be the possibility of articles not being found by the search strategy. Another possible and related limitation for the authors to include would be effects from publication biases.

19. In the conclusions, I would add the number of studies to the first sentence, alongside the numbers of participants and countries.

20. Table 2 could include a few small points of clarification about the studies.
   a. For DAFNE, could you define “long term” in the findings?
   b. Rather than saying “To come” for the Whole Systems Model and Dialog, could you say “Protocol paper only”?
   c. In general, it would be useful to incorporate p-values into the findings to enable the reader to distinguish between tendencies, and weak versus strong statistically significant findings.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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