Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring the impact of common assessment instrumentation on communication and collaboration in inpatient and community-based mental health settings: a focus group study

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Reviewer: Marian Ådnanes

Reviewer’s report:

The conclusion from this review is that the article needs Major Compulsory Revisions before a decision on publication can be reached.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The study has two interesting and important goals. Firstly, how clinical staff collaborated and communicated with one another over the course of transfers of care. Secondly, whether use of compatible assessment instrumentation (i.e. the RAI-MH and inter RAI CMH) had any positive affect in terms of collaboration/communication.

The dilemma within health care, with differentiation and specialization going on at the same time are well known, and solutions are needed. Hence, this is a highly relevant study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The study uses focus groups for collection of data; two groups with personnel from inpatient and community care, 10 from each of these settings participated. The methods used are clearly described. However, the authors do not explain why this design and method is used. Also, it would be interesting to know why none from other professions except nurses participated from the inpatient-staff (for instance psychologists or psychiatrists). Not at least because it is explained in the conclusions that both instruments in the study included several hundred items on key life areas that are relevant to the various disciplines involved in care (Psychology, psychiatry, nursing, medicine etc.)

3. Are the data sound?

The main impression is that the data presented are somewhat sketchy. Furthermore, the focus is more on the pre-implementation-phase, with the participants' description of challenges and their expectations related to the use of compatible instruments rather than actual effects – positive or negative – or none. Instead, the focus (suddenly), in the end of the result-chapter, is on the problem related to lack of use of the instruments despite mandated since 2005. Therefore, in the end, the question raised in the article is related to the lack of implementation within the services rather than effects of it. At this point, as a
reader you feel a bit disappointed because one would expect, based on the questions raised, that the instruments had actually been tried out. On the other hand (and as a consequence of lack of use of instruments), important results concerning challenges related to implementation are presented.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The structure of the article seems to be according to relevant standards.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

See comments on point 3. It is concluded that the impact of implementing compatible instruments is not immediate because of slow implementation. The authors still think that there is a great potential to promote interdisciplinary care. They point at the need for clinicians to see that the instrument is useful and that it is meaningful to use it. This is probably right, but it is not clearly reflected in the results. While the discussion mainly focuses on the participants' views of the potential of such instruments, despite no effects so far, the actual difficulties related to implementation is not discussed in any significant degree.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

No, the authors do not go through possible limitations to the study. This is a pre-post-design, and the goal is to explore impact. This is rather ambitious, and the choice of methods should be discussed.

The study focus on impact of the instrumentation on communication and collaboration. However, it is concluded that it may be some time before the impact of an integrated mental health info system on communication is realized. It might be then that this conclusion beats the whole basis for the study?

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Line 63-64: The authors should refer to other studies showing respectively the advantages/possibilities, the challenges of integrated services and also problems related to implementing such instruments.

This is a pre-post study on the use of two instruments. Results from other studies evaluating other instruments should be mentioned. Problems related to implementing tools/instruments for integration is well known within health services, and the result should be discussed with reference to such studies.

Both authors state that they do not have any conflicting interest related to this work. However they have been involved in the development of the inter RAI CMH assessment system and JPH is the lead author on the RAI-Mental Health assessment system. The participants among staff were also recruited by the RAI-Mental Health coordinator for the organization. The question that arises is
whether the authors are evaluating such instruments in general or these particular instruments. This is not clear everywhere in the article. At first it seems like it is instruments in general as they refer to these two instruments as examples. If this is the case, the question raises if it is possible to conclude in general based on these two examples of instruments. If they conclude about these instruments in particular, which probably is the correct thing to do based on the study's design, there is a problem of conflict of interests seems more obvious. In the presentation of results it is referred to these specific instruments when the staff's impression of challenges is presented (from line 188). Also in the conclusion it is referred to the specific characteristics of the instruments (from line 280), and their great potential. My main impression from this is that the article is about these specific instruments, and not instruments in general. This should be clearly stated, and a more concrete description of the instruments should be given in the introduction (and not in the conclusions). The authors should then also explain why there are no conflicting interests.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title ambitiously focus on impact of the instrumentation on communication and collaboration. However, when no positive impact is found, it is concluded that it may be some time before the impact of an integrated mental health info system on communication is realized.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

Other: Line 62: A definition of integrated services is needed in the introduction; Line 126: "of use" is written twice; Line 201: "a ways to go"

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
No competing interests.