Reviewer's report

Title: It's all about relationships: A qualitative study of health researchers' perspectives of conducting interdisciplinary health research

Version: 2 Date: 11 March 2008

Reviewer: Sara Shaw

Reviewer's report:

Authors have addressed many of the substantive points and the paper is much clearer. However a number of issues still need to addressed.

MAJOR REVISIONS

1) The section on sampling and data collection still needs work. I am unsure why authors have chosen to separate information on sampling across pp2 7 and 8. It would make more sense to the reader if information about inclusion criteria, generating lists and sampling approaches were together. The suggestion that the study investigators ‘generated a small list of possible participants’ sounds rather parochial (did this actually involve a systematic search of the literature and/or was it about identifying people already known to the authors?) and does not relate well to the rather complicated (and still unclear) description of sampling given on the subsequent page. Authors need to be much clearer throughout this section about what they did and why.

MINOR REVISIONS (ESSENTIAL)

2) P5, para 2 – The review of the literature in the background section would read much better if authors pulled out the key points across the literature cited (rather than providing a list of authors), allowing readers to more easily gain an overall picture of the ID landscape. Also who is Giacomi referring to as feeling compelled?

3) P6 – is this really about ‘documenting the difficulties’ or more about the nature and realities of ID research? Also I’m not sure that the phrase ‘a detailed and broad examination’ makes good sense.

4) P6, last sentence – is the larger study ‘examining evaluation’ or is it an evaluation of ID health research?

5) P8, top para – Why not be clear about numbers here? E.g. of the 20 people invited to participate, 19 agreed and one declined due to scheduling conflicts. Similarly on the page before, it would help to be clear about how many participants within the sample had worked with other participants.

6) P9, final para – take out ‘interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed’ – this has already been stated in the para above.

7) P12, first para – Table 1 is a welcome addition but it might be more useful to
sort the table according to one of the headers so readers can easily gain a sense of the characteristics. In the text, authors should simply draw readers’ attention to the breadth of disciplines within the table rather than repeating the list. Authors might also like to reflect on the limitations of their sample in relation to the level of involvement in both research and ID studies and the lack of any junior researchers.

8) p13 second para – the second sentence is not clear and needs rewriting.

9) p14, final para – as far as I can tell, taken together, the four subthemes do not ‘offer a picture of how interdisciplinary research was conceptualised’.

10) p18, first para – This doesn’t really make sense - do authors really mean culminate? Second quote – delete ‘it’ and include [everyone taking part in…]  

11) p21, ID success – have challenges been identified from the data alongside strategies, or from elsewhere? Strategies in Table 2 do not really read as strategies and remain uninformative (as before)

12) p24 second para – delete ‘that may have been perceived as “soft research”’

13) There are a number of minor errors throughout (e.g. p13, quote – delete ‘a’ at the start; p15, first para – ‘but (not and) was inherent’; numbers less than 11 should be written out in full throughout the paper). Authors also have a tendency to use ‘this’ throughout the paper and need to go through the paper and clarify what ‘this’ means (e.g. p20 ‘This was seen as both a necessity but also a frustration as sometimes the short time frame of grants did not allow for this….. For some, the length of this process…’ p25 ‘this provides a position whereby…’).

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

14) p13, first para – it might be useful to specify what authors mean by ‘written about’ – are they referring to interviewees who have undertaken and published academic work about ID research?

15) p17, second para – ‘less conscious’ than what?

16) p24 first para – do authors really mean ‘unruly’?

17) p25 conclusion - do authors really mean ‘suspect’? ID research does not come across this way from their findings

18) In several places, authors use ‘As well…’ at the start of a sentence. It does not read very well and could be replaced by e.g. ‘In addition…’ or ‘Furthermore…’

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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:**

I declare that I have no competing interests