Reviewer's report

Title: Improving the Use of Research Evidence in Guideline Development: 3. Group Composition

Version: 1 Date: 8 June 2006

Reviewer: Martin Eccles

Reviewer's report:

General
Overall I think this is a well written paper and I do not disagree with the conclusions it draws. However I think it could be structured better.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

There is a degree of detail in the abstract that does not appear in the paper but both could and should. I would suggest the authors ensure that the detail in their abstract is located in the relevant sections of the paper and they then re-write their abstract.

I suggest that the key questions addressed by the review (currently only appearing in the abstract) are reproduced in the text at the end of the Background immediately before the Methods section.

Much of the content of the paper addresses issues of the composition of guideline development groups. However there are two sets of questions and answers in the abstract (on who should be consulted and how) that do not appear to be addressed by the paper and do not clearly appear in the body of the paper. The authors should consider re-structuring their paper to make the distinctions between their attempts to answer the three questions clearer.

The answers should appear at a place in the text where they logically emerge from the preceding text. They could also be drawn together in a Box within the body of the paper.

In considering the issue of composition the authors do not relate composition to the topic of the guideline. At the moment there is a risk that the conclusions of the paper could be taken forward in a bureaucratic way that results in token multi-disciplinarity when it is not necessarily needed. There may be occasions when the composition of a guideline group is relatively homogenous because the questions being addressed, whilst important, of limited broader interest. This said, I suspect there will be no evidence addressing this. Nonetheless, the notion of matching group membership to guideline topic seems worthy of slightly more debate.

In terms of the debate around the involvement of consumers in guideline development groups an article (on which I am an author) discusses the issues and practical experiences. This may be of relevance to this section of the paper. van Wersch A, Eccles M. Involvement of consumers in the development of evidence based clinical guidelines: practical experiences from the North of England Evidence based guideline development programme. Quality in Health Care 2001; 10: 10-16

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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