Author's response to reviews

Title: Improving the Use of Research Evidence in Guideline Development: 15. Disseminating and Implementing Guidelines

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Improving the Use of Research Evidence in Guideline Development: 15. Disseminating and Implementing Guidelines

Reviewer: Merrick Zwarenstein
Reviewer’s report: General

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

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

"Findings from implementation research should be used to inform decisions about strategies for guideline implementation."
I think the phrasing in this article is often inexplicit, and some of the meaning may be lost to readers who are not already immersed in (and convinced by) the implementation research literature. I suggest, for example that the sentence in the summary, (see extract above) could be rephrased as:
WHO should choose strategies to implement their guidelines from among those which have been evaluated positively in the published literature on implementation research.

Done, thanks.

The next set of recommendations in the summary are also not clear. What should each level of WHO do? This is not explicitly answered.

We have added “headquarters and regional offices” to the last bullet-point.

In the results section, both references 7 and references 9 are cited. But 9 is an update of 7, and so supercedes the findings of 7, and indeed, the findings of 7 are no longer valid, and only those from 9 should be cited.

We disagree. Reference 7 is an overview of systematic reviews addressing all aspects of improving professional behaviour in the health services, while reference 9 is a systematic review of trials of interventions to implement clinical practice guidelines. Although there is a substantial overlap, one is not an update of the other. In fact, the literature searches for both reviews went up to 1998.

I am also doubtful about the usefulness of citing a very limited set of reviews from developing countries in a table, as these results will be extensively used. And yet they represent a subgroup analysis from a larger study, with geography being the criterion. Since this subgroup is a bit arbitrary (in terms of the research question and the generalisability of results from one country or setting to another) the findings in this table are probably misleading. And this is important, because they may be heavily relied upon.

We agree and have removed this table.
What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.