Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge in process? Exploring barriers between epidemiological research and local health policy development.

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Reviewer: Evelyne EL de Leeuw

Reviewer’s report:

This is an admirable, interesting and much-needed contribution to the literature on research utilisation, and I commend the authors on their work.

However - I have two major points that the authors need to address for a resubmission of this work:

(a) the comprehensiveness of the literature review can be questioned. The methods through which they have arrived at their lists is not documented adequately - the search parameters, inclusion and exclusion criteria, etc. should be mentioned. Having don a similar study (unmentioned by the authors of the current piece!) with colleagues recently myself (de Leeuw, E., A. McNess, B. Crisp & K. Stagnitti (2008) Theoretical reflections on the nexus between research, policy and practice. Critical Public Health 18 (1) 5-20) I know that there is much more work out there that should have been reflected in this article. It may even change the argument fundamentally. For instance, the authors mention the 'two communities' work by Caplan, but fail to address the fairly substantial critique that has been expressed on this 'hypothesis' - in our work we could demonstrate that there are many environments where there is an absence of two distinct communities! See also notably the work by Brendan Gibson. Further interesting insights missing from this piece are Bowen & Zwi (absent because they did not use words from the search parameters by the authors - but Google Scholar or PubMed this and then follow links to any of the 60+ references and you will realise that you have missed a substantial piece of 'evidence' in this debate!

(b) I find it interesting that the authors found, describe, and intend to use, (theoretical) frameworks that are all highly dynamic, complex, and socially constructed in particular environments. Yet, the final product of their analysis is an overly simplistic, perhaps even naive overview of the factors that stand in the way of research utilisation. I would really appreciate it if the authors could ground these findings in the current state of play in political science: they talk a lot about policy networks, but how does that empirical body of knowledge relate to the fairly unilateral findings of this study....?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published

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