Reviewer's report

Title: A relational conceptual framework for multidisciplinary health research centre infrastructure

Version: 2 Date: 24 September 2010

Reviewer: Jeremy Segrott

Reviewer's report:

I thank the authors for their constructive response to my original review. All of the main points which I raised in my review have been addressed, including my uncertainty about how infrastructure was being defined and bounded.

I think the paper makes some very important points about how different aspects of infrastructure are related and develop relationally, and the need to capture this complexity when assessing research centre development.

I still wonder if conceptualisation of the authors' model in terms of infrastructure/structures is the best one, as for me, much of what they discuss concerns processes (and at certain points outputs), even if, as they rightly point out, it is important not to conflate outcomes from the research process (papers, funding, impact, etc.) with outcomes during the process (increasing research capacity, social and technical capital, etc.). If funding for research centres comes with the specific aim and requirement that they increase capacity, develop new researchers and foster collaborative links, then presumably these will be key outcomes against which such centres should be measured, if only in the short/medium term. But I acknowledge that the authors provide a clear description of what they mean by structure, that this includes social structures, and that they address how the development of infrastructure should be assessed.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.