Reviewer’s report

Title: Information Transfer: What do decision-makers want and need from researchers

Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2007

Reviewer: Martin Eccles

Reviewer’s report:

General

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

Abstract

Methods: Suggested text edits - A cross-sectional telephone administered survey. Questions covered current …
The analysis used descriptive statistics …
Results: The participation rate was 70%.
Conclusions: The first sentence and possibly the rest of the conclusions don’t seem to relate to reported results. You should ensure that this section reflects the implications of the survey results.

The reference style used is not the Biomed one. Templates for both Refman and Endnote can be downloaded from the instructions for authors web page.

Background

Page 1 para 1. Could you provide a few more words of description about “the National Forum on Health” that would allow non-Canadian readers to understand what this body or process was.
Page 7, line 1 missing word “and impact ON knowledge,”

Methods

Design. Suggest first sentence starts - The design was a cross-sectional telephone administered survey … After the first sentence you are describing the administration or procedure of the survey. Suggest you have a separate section describing this.
Respondents – there is a considerable amount of repetition in the first paragraph (to half way down page 10) from the introduction. I suggest that you shorten this section, move it to the relevant part of the introduction and remove any remaining duplication.
Page 11 Survey. If you wish to retain the first sentence I would suggest you move it to the design section earlier in the methods. The rest of this first paragraph then logically forms part of the section on the procedure/administration of the survey.
The second paragraph of this section (The survey was divided … ) naturally forms a section on the “Content of the survey”. This could be placed before the new section on Admin/procedure.
Suggested text edits – (ii) questions about access ….; (iii) questions about which formats … ; (iv) questions about possible ….; (v) questions about current practices, … factors and the … and region.
I suggest you then have a section heading on Scoring and analysis which then describes: the general method of scoring such as the type of scale, the number of points and the scale anchors used (currently some of what is needed appears in the second paragraph on p13; all such text should be moved from the results to this section of the methods); the method of aggregation that you have used (this needs more explanation of what you have done as it is not currently clear); and then reports the analysis strategy. Given that you do multiple analyses you need to justify using a 5% and not a 1% significance level. As far as I can see adopting a 1% level of significance would only affect three of your results.
Suggested text edits – The analysis used descriptive statistics to …. At some point you need to indicate that item non-response varied and so the n’s vary across reported items. You need to add a sub-section on Ethics approval stating who granted ethics approval for the study.

Results

I’d suggest that the descriptions of the respondents is best as a Table. I’d also suggest that you identify at this point that Senior Health Planners only work in DHCs.
Page 14, section Barriers to research transfer. The second sentence repeats the Table column headings and can be deleted.
Suggested text edit – The only item where a … was observed was for the question “to what degree …” In the sentence “For this item …” remove the mean scores (which are in the table) and, at the end of the sentence, replace and with or.

Delete sentence “with respect to the barrier: To what degree … - this again repeats (non-sig) table content.

Page 15, para currently starting “Table 2 illustrates …”. The majority of this paragraph should be deleted. I am suggesting later that you amalgamate several of the Tables. Tables 1 & 2 should be amalgamated and the text will then run on from the previous paragraph describing the results of the amalgamated table and should retain only the sentence “When responses … organisation type, no statistically significant differences were …”

Bottom paragraph on page 15. The text here duplicates the content of Table 3. I suggest that Table 3 is deleted along with the short sentence that refers to it.

Page 16, section Organisational Characteristics. The third sentence (listing the table column headings) should be deleted.

The text that starts “For example, DHCs rated the extent …” to the end of that paragraph should be summarised along the lines “DHCs scored highest on all questions with the exception of impact of regulation and legislation where they scored lowest.”

At the bottom of the page, Table 5 should be amalgamated with Table 4.

Page 17, at the end of the first paragraph you refer to Table 6 but do not then say anything about it – I suggest that you remove Table 6.

As with Table 3, Table 5 is fully reported in text and should be deleted.

Tables 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 should be formatted into a single Table.

Discussion

Page 21, last paragraph (Between the latter two groups …). This section of the discussion is problematic in that the results do not report differences between CTCs and CCACs (one mis-spelling as CCASc) either descriptively or statistically. The text seems speculative and certainly does not seem to justify a further two and a half pages. If you wish to retain any of the text from the start of this para to the end of page 23 you must link it back to your empirical findings, otherwise it should be deleted.

Specific comments on the Tables.

Overall

Only report results to 1 decimal place and use a leading zero (e.g. 0.9).

Denote statistical significance with asterisks alongside the numbers in the appropriate columns, following the convention of p<0.05 = *, p<0.01 = **, p<0.001 = ***. This will remove one line from each current table.

Suggest you refer to Overall mean rather than Total mean.

You should consider incorporating the number of scale points and anchors in the Table legend.

Tables 1 & 2

Tables 1 & 2 should be amalgamated. You should use row sub-headings for organisation and role and the n should appear once only.

The data from the current Table 1 does not currently have an overall mean. This should be added and should be presented as a single row Overall Mean (sd).

Suggest the legend is “Mean score by type of organisation and role for questions about barriers to using research in decision making. This applies to all legends

Table 3 is being deleted.

Tables 4 & 5 are to be amalgamated along the lines of Table 1 & 2.

Table 6 is being deleted.

Table 7 is being deleted.

Table 8 should be included as a row in a Table amalgamating Tables 8-12. You may need to make the point about sequence; equally you might want to use this as the overall sequence for the new table.

Table 13 should have an overall mean (sd) added.

Table 14 should be amalgamated with Table 13 and should have an overall mean (sd) added.

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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)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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