Reviewer's report

Title: Economics of implementation: a case study of QUERI

Version: 2 Date: 10 August 2007

Reviewer: Martin Eccles

Reviewer's report:

Dear Dr Smith,

Thank you for re-submitting your article in the QUERI Series and for your comprehensive letter of response to our and the reviewers comments. In the light of this there are a small number of further changes we would like you to make to the article.

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

Abstract, p8,9,20 - It is not clear precisely what you mean by "Implementation science appears to have solid qualitative theory but has not reached maturity in quantitative research"? Theory is largely not about method or is above methods. Do you mean theory derived from qualitative data as opposed to quantitative data? Could you either elaborate, clarify or delete?

p9- 1st para- the discussion of barriers and facilitators is inadequately referenced and the somewhat sweeping generalizations are inappropriate – we are not aware that most such studies have not come from the VA QUERI. Therefore you need to either modify the text and if they have then there is an onus on you to prove it by citing the breadth of the field and identifying the pre-eminent role of VA QUERI studies.

p9- 2nd para – this links to the comment above - the issue about IS having solid qualitative theories and not reaching a state of maturity in quantitative research – this needs to be dealt with as suggested above.

-sentence about unofficial guidelines proliferating and not followed - could you provide a reference for this?

- ‘Qualitative studies of implementation, whether ex post or ex ante, appear to be rare outside of the QUERI program’- we find this a suprising generalisation and it is not one that we agree with. This sentence either needs to be robustly justified or deleted.

p12- line 4- ... ‘time spent on translation prior to kick-off’ - you need to define what you mean by ‘translation’ as it is not really self-evident. We think you mean preliminary work to gain acceptance by host site to engage in the intervention but are not sure.
p15- 'could in turn could guide'- delete 2nd could

p19 - 'yet we believe that a printed guideline would raise the quality of VA and non VA implementation research alike’ – does this mean a published guideline on how to undertake implementation economic analysis? If so, this is at odds with the evidence of the effectiveness of the distribution of printed materials. If this is what you were meaning then it needs to be edited to reflect the evidence. If this is not what you were meaning then this needs clarification. Are you suggesting that the world needs credible guidance for how to do economic analysis; or there is a need to convince managers to use implementation economic analyses; or economists need to do economic analyses?

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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)
None

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
None

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.