Author's response to reviews

Title: Practice Capacity to Change and Preventive Service Delivery: Subgroup Analysis from a Group Randomized Trial

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Version: 2 Date: 7 November 2007

Author's response to reviews: see over
November 7, 2007

Brian Mittman, PhD
Editor, Implementation Science

RE: MS ID: 1123563761379400
“Association of Intervention Outcomes with Practices’ Capacity to Change:
Subgroup Analysis from a Group Randomized Trial”

Dear Dr. Mittman,

Thank you for your comments and those of the external reviewer on the manuscript previously titled “Practice Capacity to Change and Preventive Service Delivery: Subgroup Analysis from a Group Randomized Trial”. As indicated by the amount of revised text, we have made concerted efforts to address each concern or suggestion raised. In the letter below, we respond point by point; in the attached file we have highlighted all changes to the text using bold typeface to facilitate your review. A second file using normal font is also provided.

Internal Reviewer:

1. The authors should provide a more complete review of prior efforts to define, conceptualize and measure practice change capacity, readiness to change and any other related concepts. An expanded literature review will also allow the authors to describe their measurement approach in the context of existing approaches, to more clearly indicate the value and foundations of the new approach. New text and citations have been added to the manuscript to address these suggestions. Specifically, we now acknowledge prior efforts in other literature addressing organizational change capacity (please note that the number of citations has increased from 18 in the original manuscript to 41 in the current manuscript). Rationale for a qualitative approach involving research team members, rather than the one taken in other studies (survey-based approach directed at members of the organization under study) has been provided in an effort to place the findings within a larger context.

2. The measurement approach (group rating process) documented in the manuscript should also be described in greater detail. Authors’ operationalization of definitions of practice change capacity should be explained and compared to published definitions and previous measurement approaches. We have added new text in the methods portion of the paper to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of our operational approach. As mentioned in the preceding...
response, we have contrasted this approach and the related operational definitions with those used in other studies of organizational capacity to change.

3. What factors did research team members consider when they rated “effort to motivate” and “effort to assist”? Did the team members consider the specific dimensions or factors embedded in existing “readiness to change” measures, or did they focus on other dimensions? (If team members considered dimensions distinct from those included in published measures of organizational readiness, what are the differences and why were these dimensions considered?) The literature related to organizational capacity to change is complex in the sense that different terms (indeed entire vocabularies) are used when referring to similar concepts. Moreover, many conceptual models emphasize some components to the exclusion of others. We have now added language providing greater detail on the qualitative process we used to generate these ratings, added specificity to the operational definitions of the two components we (and others) think most closely related to practice change capacity, and provided examples of their application. We hope that by having followed these steps and having included additional text that better characterizes our qualitative approach, we have addressed questions about the conceptual and operational overlap between our measures and those used by others.

4. Following a more complete review of prior approaches and more complete description of the authors’ approach, they should also develop recommendations regarding specific tools or approaches for assessing capacity. We now include comments on the utility of this measurement approach, general recommendations on their use, and our future plans (this added text is located near the end of the “discussion section”).

5. Does the research team plan to formalize and validate the approach? Could the authors describe the approach in sufficient detail…to allow others to replicate it or conduct the validation work needed to refine and strengthen the approach? As mentioned, we have added considerable detail in the “methods” section of this report to enable other researchers to replicate this assessment approach should they choose. In the concluding sentences of the manuscript, we now acknowledge plans to refine the organizing framework guiding the current study and to develop a measurement approach that better “diagnoses” the state of a practice’s change capacity.

6. Clarify whether the approach employed in the manuscript is similar enough to existing tools for assessing “organizational readiness to change” such that researchers who wish to follow the authors’ recommendation to assess practice change capacity can employ existing tools rather than attempt to replicate the scheme described in the manuscript. As mentioned, we have added text in the “methods” section to clarify features of the measurement approach that distinguish it from some of those previously published. A more detailed characterization of our approach will enable others to make informed decisions about applying it in other settings, or to use existing quantitative tools.

External Reviewer:
1. The figure needs a legend and/or better labeling.
A legend for the figure was originally included with the manuscript, but was perhaps overlooked by the reviewer as it followed the citations.

2. If possible without lengthening the paper substantially, the authors should provide more details about the construction of “Efforts to Motivate” and “Efforts to Assist”. Specifically, please provide examples of what these efforts were, and how/why patient efforts were rated on the 1-4 scale. What would be entailed in an “Effort to Motivate” coded as 4? As mentioned in responses above, we have added a description of the two measures we used to operationalize “motivation” and “resources for change” from our conceptual framework. Brief examples of the application of each component of the combined score have now been provided in the text.

3. Can the authors provide a citation for another paper where this has already been described? Reference to previous work has been included in the methods section of the paper, along with the appropriate citation.

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. With attention to the comments and suggestions of the reviewers, we feel the clarity and contribution of the manuscript has been greatly enhanced.

Sincerely,

David Litaker, MD, PhD