Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 7 September 2007

Reviewer: Brian Mittman

Reviewer's report:

General

This short report manuscript argues for greater attention to, and assessment of, practice change capacity. It highlights the need for reliable, validated measures of practice change capacity (and closely related concepts such as readiness to change) to permit researchers to assess these characteristics in a reliable, efficient, valid manner. The manuscript also describes the authors' experience in assessing practice change capacity, but the assessment experience described is best viewed as a preliminary, exploratory effort illustrating the need to assess practice change capacity, rather than a systematic application of an explicit, ready-to-use assessment tool.

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

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. The manuscript's core argument (advocating greater attention to, and measurement of, these attributes) requires an expanded literature review to demonstrate that current assessment practices are insufficient and to summarize the current “state of the art” in assessment. 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.

The measurement approach (group rating process) documented in the manuscript should also be described in greater detail. For example, the authors' operationalization of definitions of practice change capacity should explained and compared to published definitions and previous measurement approaches. 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?)
A more complete review of prior approaches and more complete description of the authors; approach will also help the authors develop recommendations regarding specific tools or approaches for assessing capacity. The authors' approach does not yet appear to be ready for use by other researchers. Does the research team plan to formalize and validate the approach? Could the authors describe the approach in sufficient detail in this manuscript to allow others to replicate it or conduct the validation work needed to refine and strengthen the approach? Or is the approach employed in the manuscript 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?

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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)

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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.