Author's response to reviews

Title: Community health intervention research: Is reporting on interventions a weak link?

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Previous title: Community health intervention research: Is reporting on interventions a weak link?

Current title: Is reporting on interventions a weak link in understanding how and why they work?: A preliminary exploration using community heart health exemplars

We are pleased to re-submit the above manuscript. We sincerely appreciate your openness to an extended timeline and hope that you are satisfied with how we have addressed the helpful comments from you and from the two reviewers. Below is an itemized list of suggested revisions along with a description of how we have addressed the concerns.

Concern: need to clearly articulate why you are doing this work ¿ to what end?

Response: The purpose of the work is now clearly articulated in the abstract, introduction, discussion and conclusion. We strategically reinforce that the primary purpose of the work is to explore the extent to which (lack of) reporting on intervention processes is a weak link in advancing knowledge about how and why community health interventions effect change. The premise (explicated in the article) is that systematic investigation of these intervention processes across studies requires sufficient reporting about interventions.

Concern: need to clearly articulate current status, the limitations and the next methodological steps

Response: Limitations and future methodological steps have been described. The variable and limited reporting on interventions in the heart health exemplars provides a rationale for exploring reporting issues in published literature from different topics and time periods. We offer specific suggestions for next steps in
the discussion and conclusion sections.

Concern: need to describe how the propositions were developed
Response: The basis for proposition development is now described. Please note that a more complete description of the propositions has been summarized in a companion paper that is currently being revised for publication.

Concern: need to provide more detail on the methods to demonstrate the systematic process that was used (e.g., describe the pool of available studies and criteria used to select the sample of studies and articles for the work; describe how discrepancies were resolved; report reliability of the extraction process)
Response: The methods section now clearly describes the systematic process that was used, including how heart health was chosen as the exemplar, how articles were selected, and how discrepancies were resolved in the data extraction process. Also, refinement of the data extraction tool is mentioned as an important next step. It was not the primary focus of this initial work to call attention to (lack of) reporting on interventions as an impediment to better bridging science and practice (since insufficient information is available to examine issues of how and why interventions work across multiple studies).

Concern: need to represent the implications of the work in much more circumspect terms
Response: Agreed. We revised the implications to be aligned with and appropriate to the main intent of the study. Two implications of the work are clearly articulated: the need for a standard tool to guide systematic reporting of intervention processes for multi-level and multi-strategy programs; and the need to have a clearer understanding of potential barriers or disincentives to reporting intervention processes.

Concern: need to ground the work in other writings on the measurement or description of complex processes within trials of complex interventions
Response: We have substantially developed the introduction and discussion pointing to other relevant writing in this field.

Concern: make sure the title accurately reflects what is done in the manuscript
Response: The title has been changed to more accurately reflect what was done in this study.

Concern: consider the rationale for a focus on complex interventions in community health and how this focus relates to other issue areas
Response: We have provided a more detailed explanation regarding the importance of complex interventions in community health.

Concern: the discussion needs to cover the methodology and the content of what is done
Response: The purpose, reflections about the findings, and the scope of the
implications are now covered in the discussion.

Concern: if maintained, the difference between proving and improving interventions needs elaboration or an example
Response: The difference between proving and improving interventions (in the discussion) has been elaborated using an example.

Concern: the conclusions need to reflect what is done and not done in the manuscript, rather than broader implications that are not directly relevant to the purpose of the manuscript
Response: The conclusions drawn are based on relevant findings from this study, with implications for future work.

Thank you, once again, for your patience and for your guidance with this manuscript.

Sincerely,

Barb Riley, on behalf of the authors