Reviewer's report

Title: Arduous implementation: does the Normalisation Process Model explain why it's so difficult to embed decision support technologies in routine clinical practice?

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Reviewer: David Armstrong

Reviewer's report:

This paper involved ‘experts’ analysing the virtues of a model of decision support technologies.

This was a curious paper in both aim and method. Given the lack of space constraints for an on-line journal I would broadly support its publication but I think it could be improved as under:

• It was never clear what a DST (decision-support technology) actually was. In places it seems like a support for enabling clinicians to make better clinical decisions, elsewhere a support to facilitate patient involvement in the consultation. This needs to be clarified and if restricted to facilitating patients’ involvement a different acronym employed to differentiate this ‘technology’ from clinical support.

• A distinction was made between the new model and conventional approaches: the former apparently emphasises everyday practice whereas the latter ‘adoption and implementation’ approaches emphasise ‘barriers’. This was not very persuasive, indeed the model was set up to ‘explore factors that promote and inhibit implementation’ which sounds exactly what existing approaches do. This difference needs further explanation.

• The exact status of the model was unclear. At times it seems simply an aide-memoire (eg ‘don’t forget context’), at other times it seems make claims to be an explanatory framework (as in Fig 3). Which is it? And if it is the latter its value can only be measured in terms of the fruitfulness of its predictions (which can then be tested). But the paper seemed to conclude it was a jolly good model without clarifying for what? If it is explanatory what sorts of hypotheses can be derived and what sorts of studies could be conducted to test them? This simple addition would considerably help readers with the status/value of the model.

• The methodology used in this paper was interesting but it would have been useful to see more details of the results both in the spreadsheet and in inferences drawn as this method itself might justify the value of the paper.

Revision along the above lines would give the paper a theoretical and empirical focus and take it further from the risk that it appears like an in-house seminar report.
**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'