Reviewer's report

Title: Research in Action: Using Positive Deviance to Improve Quality of Health Care

Version: 2 Date: 2 February 2009

Reviewer: David Sommerfeld

Reviewer's report:

The authors have substantially improved the quality and contribution of the manuscript and addressed my key concerns. I have only a few remaining recommendations for the authors.

Minor essential revisions

1. The case study is presented well in this draft and concisely articulates important actions at each step of the process. However, in addition to providing good examples for each step, the case study discussion would be further strengthened by adding a paragraph or two at the end that summarizes important aspects about the PD approach that were learned from/highlighted in this case study. The authors may want to revise/revisit some of the material presented on the bottom of page 16 and include it at the end of case of the case study.

2. Similar to above concern, please provide a more extensive conclusion section to transition the reader from the specific aspects learned from/highlighted by the case study about PD to the more general limitations and benefits of the PD approach. The conclusion would be improved by expanding upon the important “take-aways” the authors want to impart to the reader and reiterating why others should consider PD in their implementation and organizational change research.

3. Page 10, typo, “…while such trails produce…” should presumably be “…while such trials produce…”

4. Page 11, need to qualify initial statement about action research, since action research encompasses a much broader focus than best practices in organizations. The authors appropriately situated the concept of action research later sentences by include the phrase, “as applied to organizations”. May want to include that qualification in the first sentence of the paragraph.

5. Page 21, I think the authors meant to include the word “met” in the statement “…by 2008 about 75% of patients have door-to-balloon time guidelines”.

Discretionary Revisions

6. The authors may also want to reorganize the order and flow of their sections somewhat to provide a potentially more linear ordering for the reader.
A potential sequencing to consider:

Introduction
• Statement of problem – difficulty of getting good health care practices implemented
• Outline of paper structure

Contemporary approaches to identify and change organizational practices
• Biomedical/epidemiological strengths and weaknesses
• Quality improvement / action research strengths and weaknesses
• Positive deviance approach as an approach that:
  o 1) integrates positive features of both approaches(addresses certain limitations
  o 2) has been successfully utilized in other parts of the world
  o 3) focuses on dissemination (e.g. current pg 14-15)

Methodological considerations
Discuss each step of the process

Case Study
• Background
• Steps 1-4
• Summary

Conclusion
• Specific aspects learned/highlighted in case study
• Some limitations of PD approach
• Brief specific benefits/advantages for why PD should be considered

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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