Author's response to reviews

Title: Measuring organisational and individual factors thought to influence the success of Quality Improvement in primary care: a systematic review of instruments

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Sales,

On behalf of my co-authors, I am pleased to submit a second revision of our manuscript “Measuring organisational and individual factors thought to influence the success of Quality Improvement in primary care: a systematic review of instruments” for your consideration.

We thank the reviewers for their review of our revised manuscript. The comments provided helpful suggestions for improving the clarity of the manuscript. Our amended manuscript incorporates most of the reviewers’ suggestions (highlighted using track changes). We provide additional responses to the reviewers’ comments below with cross referencing to changes in the manuscript.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Brennan (on behalf of Marije Bosch, Heather Buchan and Sally Green)
Reviewer 1 - Cameo Borntrager

Minor essential revisions

1. Similar to comments from my first review, it would be helpful if the authors inserted more examples of concepts. Though the authors did include more examples than in the original manuscript, and frequently they referred to citations of other papers, there are several areas where readability would be improved if they provided concrete examples given the complexity of the methodology (and frequent requirements of referencing tables and figures). Though the tables and figures are extremely thorough, the manuscript’s readability would simply be better if more examples were included in text. For instance, in the first few sentences of the paper, it would be helpful if the authors identified a specific example of a CQI intervention. Similarly, under the Terminology section, it would be helpful to insert specific examples as different ‘domains’ are described.

We have included a specific example of a CQI intervention in the first paragraph of the background.

We have added the examples of the domains to the description of terminology. We have removed this text from the body of the text and included it in Figure 2, for ease of interpretation of the figure (in response to Reviewer 2, point 4).

2. Further, under Taxonomy Development (pg 12), more specific examples would be helpful. For instance, “…in Stage 2 was used (i) to identify factors that were missing from our initial framework (and hence, the taxonomy) such as [INSERT SPECIFIC EXAMPLE HERE] and (ii) to determine how factors had been conceptualized. The initial taxonomy was revised to incorporate new factors and prevailing conceptualisations, such as [INSERT ONE NEW FACTOR HERE; INSERT ONE PREVAILING CONCEPTUALISATION HERE]…”

We thank the reviewer for providing additional clarification regarding suggestions about examples. We have added examples to the text in the sections suggested (page 11-13). We refer to figure 2 for examples (the figure illustrating use of terms) in the last two sentences of this section (page 12-13), where we felt the addition of examples in brackets would make the text difficult to follow.

3. The paragraphs under the heading ‘Description of the CQI use and implementation domain’ are confusing. This appears to be in part because ‘CQI use and implementation’ refers to an overarching domain, as well as to subdomains (e.g., it appears there are specific measures for ‘use of CQI’ as well as for constructs that fall under the ‘use of CQI’ domain. It may be less confusing to reword the domain title something more broad.

While ‘CQI use and implementation’ is the overarching domain, this is then split into ‘use of CQI methods’ (at two levels, organisation-wide and team level), and ‘implementation of CQI methods’. We have changed the domain to ‘CQI implementation and use’ (reversing the order of ‘implementation’ and ‘use’), and provided examples in the text of what we mean by ‘implementation’ of CQI versus ‘use’ of CQI. We think this ordering is more intuitive because ‘implementation’ precedes ‘use’. We have also revised the overall description of the domain to simplify and clarify.

Changes made are as follows:
Changing the domain name to ‘CQI implementation and use’, with the change reflected throughout the paper, including the ordering of content in table 3
Revision to description of the domain, including addition of examples to illustrate what we mean by ‘implementation’ and ‘use of CQI methods’ (p18-19)

4. The authors specifically mentioned that instruments measuring fidelity to CQI methods were limited, though they did not revisit this issue in the Future Directions section of the Discussions. Given the importance of fidelity measures to most intervention implementation projects, the authors should list/revisit this issue in the Future Directions section.

We discuss these issues under the heading ‘Measurement of CQI implementation and use’. We have made a minor change to the first sentence in paragraph 2, page 27 and in paragraph 3, page 28 to clarify that this discussion relates to measures of fidelity.

Under the heading ‘Key considerations for researchers’, we limited our discussion to more general issues relating to the development of instruments.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Given the complexity of the domain for organizational climate and culture, the authors may want to consider grouping instruments into those that specifically measure org climate, separate from org culture, and separate from a combined org climate + culture category. This would reduce the need to section out items individually.

We have not made this change. The difference in item content between measures of climate and those purporting to measure culture were very subtle. Most often, the difference was in the labelling of the instrument rather than in the content of instruments. Given this, and the disagreement over whether measures of culture are distinct from measures of climate, it was not possible to separate the instruments (in the text or table). Instead, we chose to indicate if the author had stated that they were measuring culture. We did not do the same for measures of climate because this term is not in common use in the QI literature (although it is used in relation to ‘implementation climate’ to convey a similar concept). We adopted the term climate because the content of these instruments closely matched operational definitions of climate in the organisational behaviour literature. Instruments categorised under QI climate have very varied labels, with no single term used with any consistency (as described in the example in paragraph 1, page 13).

Reviewer 2 – Cara Lewis

Discretionary Revisions

1. Consider rephrasing the fifth aim on page 6 to more accurately reflect the objectives of the COSMIN application which is to rate the “methods used during instrument development and testing” (clearly articulated on page 14) as opposed to rating the measurement properties of the instrument itself. The current wording of aim 5 makes this distinction less clear.

We have made this change.

2. The authors are not consistent in their use of terms to refer to “instruments”, “measures”, “measurement instruments”, and “assessments”. Perhaps utilizing one term consistently (e.g., “instrument” which is included in the glossary) throughout would make for greater clarity.
We have made this change throughout the text, except in a few instances where the more general term ‘measures’ was consistent with the points we intended to make (e.g. in the discussion we talk about developing a core set of measures).

There were four instances where we use ‘measurement instruments’ (e.g. systematic reviews of measurement instruments) – we think it provides greater clarity in these instances. We checked our use of the term ‘assessments’ and this was only used in relation to assessing measurement properties of instruments.

3. Does “InQuIRe” stand for anything? If so, please define.

We have included the full name for the framework - InQuIRe (Informing Quality Improvement Research) (page six, the first instance of use).

4. Figure 2 is slightly confusing in its current form. Is each level of the text meant to be a separate construct? I wonder if a table with 3 columns representing each level would make the case more clearly.

We tried using a table to present this information, but because the terms ‘categories’ and ‘constructs’ relate to multiple levels the table was less clear than the figure. We have annotated the figure with description to support interpretation of the figure (removing the description from the body of the paper) (Figure 2).