Reviewer's report

**Title:** Identifying factors likely to influence compliance with diagnostic imaging guideline recommendations for spine disorders among chiropractors in North America: a focus group study using the Theoretical Domains Framework.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 4 May 2012

**Reviewer:** Saravana Kumar

**Reviewer's report:**

Thank you for asking me to review this manuscript. This manuscript reports on a qualitative research project which aimed to identify chiropractors' beliefs about managing uncomplicated back pain without x-rays and to explore barriers and facilitators to implementing evidence-based recommendations on lumbar spine x-rays.

There are several positives features about this publication. They are:

- It is well written, clearly set out and has a logical flow of information
- It is well referenced and it provides a good summary of current evidence in this area
- It utilises a sound and rigorous research methodology which has been tried and tested in the field of implementation science
- The findings from this research study adds to the emerging body of evidence in the area of implementation science for complementary and alternate therapies generally, and chiropractic specifically

However, there are some issues which I would like to address. They are:

- The objectives of this research were to explore barriers and facilitators to implementing evidence-based recommendations on lumbar spine X-rays and yet there is little to no mention about facilitators (with primary focus on barriers only). The only reference to facilitators is in the first sentence of the conclusion. From my perspective, if the objective was to explore both barriers and facilitators, then they both should be discussed. I find this research focussed on barriers with inadequate coverage on the facilitators.

- Rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research is paramount. While there are statements which indicate rigour was considered as part of the data collection and data analysis process (such as use of an independent observer, use of multiple coders), additional details on rigour could be provided. Important concepts such as member checking, reliability of coding process, self-reflection could also be explored here.

- While the authors clearly state that they chose to use Theoretical Domains Framework for this research, there is no justification as to why they chose this. I
can make an assumption about the reasoning underpinning this choice; however, a clear explanation about the reasoning for selection of this framework would be welcomed.

• The small sample size is a major concern. Given that in two focus groups, only a handful of participants were present (n=3 and n = 4), I am concerned if focus group is the right mechanism for data collection in this context. Furthermore, while this research is pitched as being undertaken in US and Canada, only seven participants “represent” Canada (with 14 from US). While the small sample size has been acknowledged, this limitation should be strengthened.

• This is a personal observation and unsure as to what the research requirements might be in other countries. I note that the research had ethical approval from the Ottowa Hospital Research Ethics Board in Canada while the research was undertaken in Canada and the US. Were they not any requirements for ethical approval in US to undertake this research?

**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