Reviewer’s report

Title: Tool for evaluating research implementation challenges: A sense-making protocol for addressing implementation challenges in complex research settings

Version: 2 Date: 1 July 2012

Reviewer: Alison Hutchinson

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

The authors describe a protocol for making sense of implementation challenges encountered during research undertaken in complex settings. This article is well written and provides a theory-based, practical approach to managing implementation research challenges that are commonly encountered in ‘real world’ research. This approach is highly relevant to implementation research and will provide researchers with a useful tool for dealing with such challenges. While the authors applied the approach to research undertaken within the nursing home setting (and hence their examples relate to this setting) it has applicability to and could be readily adapted for other health care settings.

Major Compulsory Revisions
Nil

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Within the Abstract and the body of the article you refer to the Tool for Evaluating Research Implementation Challenges as ‘TECH’; however, it is not clear what TECH actually stands for. Could you revise the acronym or explain what the ‘C’ and ‘H’ stand for.

2. The term ‘sense-making’ is used in the Abstract (Conclusion) and within the body of the article (Background, second paragraph); however, the definition of this term is not introduced until the Methods section (first paragraph). It would be clearer to the reader if this term was defined at the beginning.

Discretionary Revisions

3. Abstract, Background, opening sentence – I recommend that you use the term ‘studies’ rather than ‘trials’, because such challenges arise in studies other than trials, and I believe your tool/protocol is applicable to other study designs as well.

4. You note (in the section titled, Implementation challenges in complex research settings) that organisational characteristics, such as climate and culture, can present challenges for research conducted across multiple sites. Do you have any advice or insights that could be included in Table 2 to illustrate how you dealt with this highly challenging issue?
5. You seem to use the terms 'tool' and 'protocol' interchangeably – I recommend consistent use of one term or a clear explanation of two separate products, if they are indeed different.

Minor issues not for publication

6. In section titled, The Study Example: CONNECT for Quality, in the last sentence:

“... currently a gold standard for training nursing home staff how to prevent resident falls”, should read, “... currently a gold standard for training nursing home staff in how to prevent resident falls”.

7. In the section titled, Applying the Tool for Evaluating Research Implementation Challenges, first paragraph, second sentence (“...but were unable to attend a scheduled the 30-minute CONNECT class sessions”) needs re-wording.

8. In Table 2, in the strategies column for the last challenge in section on Research Setting, the second sentence (“Use multiple delivery methods such as written, oral, storytelling that do not rely on.”) seems to be incomplete.

9. In Table 2, the last challenge is referred to as “Unfamiliarity with NH setting”. The term ‘unfamiliarity’ seems cumbersome – my suggestion would be to change it to “Lack of familiarity with the NH setting”.

**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.