Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Sara J Singer

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In “Measuring team factors thought to influence the success of Quality Improvement in primary care: a systematic review of instruments,” Sue E Brennan, Marije Bosch, Heather Buchan, and Sally E Green, reviewed 170 teamwork-related instruments, developed a taxonomy for understanding their content, and evaluated their psychometric properties. This article represents a very ambitious and helpful piece of work. Below I provide suggestions for improving the paper in the order in which they appear.

Major Compulsory

1. The authors should be aware of, make reference to, and distinguish this review from another excellent recent review of teamwork instruments: Valentine, M. A., Nembhard, I. M., & Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Measuring Teamwork in Health Care Settings: A Review of Survey Instruments. Harvard Business School Working Paper #11-116. I believe that both make useful contributions. However, since the Valentine et al. article is already in the public domain, this paper should acknowledge it.

2. Abstract

While I recognize that it is fairly standard to begin paper by identifying the gap in the literature you will fill through your paper, it seems a little disingenuous to say, “Teamwork is an important element of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), yet we know little about how team-level factors influence CQI outcomes.” In addition, the gap this paper fills is about measuring team-level factors, not about their relationship to outcomes. I suggest you emphasize the importance of this link and establish the need for measurement tools in order to evaluate it.

Background

3. I understand from your title and methods that you narrowed the scope of this study by focusing on CQI in primary care. Your introduction should explain why this focus was appropriate. As written, I don’t believe you addressed primary care at all.

Methods—no major comments

Result—no major comments

Discussion
4. p.28 Limitations. The first sentence should be modified to reflect the preceding article by Valentine et al.

5. p.28 bottom. You should also add a limitation acknowledging that you did not pursue further instruments from articles that did not include the survey items—an apparently large number of papers.

Conclusions
6. This section should again emphasize the importance of teamwork for CQI in primary care in particular.

Minor Discretionary
Background
7. p.4 The second paragraph provides a more compelling beginning to this paper than the first. I’m not sure you need the first paragraph at all. If you feel otherwise, perhaps you could weave some of its content into the second paragraph.

Methods
8. p.8 top. “Reference lists of identified systematic reviews were screened. Snowballing techniques (citation searches, reference lists) were used to trace the development and use of instruments included in Stage 4.” Since you haven’t introduced Stage 4 at this point, please provide a little context for this reference. Also, you write, “The full text of potentially relevant studies was retrieved and screened for inclusion by one author (SB).” On what basis were articles screened for inclusion in Stage 1?

9. p.8 Data Extraction. I realize that you refer the reader to Table 1 to see the list of data extracted, but it would be helpful if you characterized here what you considered “data.”

10. p.9 Stage 3. You write: “For constructs not adequately covered by suitable instruments, we included instruments with potential for adaptation.” Please explain what you mean by “potential for adaptation.” For example, does this mean you borrowed instruments from other industries or ones that did not meet your initial screening criteria? Do you convey which are the areas in need of more survey development? This would be very helpful.

11. p.11 bottom. It may be hard to imagine how teamwork instruments might not be relevant to a primary care setting. Please expand.

Results
12. Missing for me from each section is a brief statement about why each of these domains and constructs matter to CQI in primary care. Perhaps if this were done well up front I would not feel its absence so acutely, but as written I feel like these results are insufficiently grounded to the objective of your effort.

13. p.21 Instrument characteristics, development and measurement properties.
This section would benefit from a brief statement of why you reviewed the development and measurement properties of these instruments—presumably to assist the reader in choosing the most valid and reliable instruments.

Discussion

14. p.27 Ensuring conceptual clarity. An example of two similar items measuring emergent states and team processes that would constitute an intermingling would be helpful.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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 to disclose.