**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Fading Vision: Knowledge Translation in the Implementation of a Public Health Policy Intervention

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 8 October 2012

**Reviewer:** Paul Ward

**Reviewer's report:**

Major Essential

1. A major issue that needs to be dealt with is in relation to theory, or lack thereof. On Page 6, you introduce a distinction between ‘implementation theory’ and ‘knowledge translation’ – this needs to be expanded and defined in much more detail. What does the reader need to understand about implementation theory? Who are they key theorists? What are the debates about? How did you use this – and if you did not use it, why not? You say that there is “no dialogue or cross-referencing between the two bodies of work” – I was not sure exactly what you meant here, or the relevance to the paper – please draw out the inferences with more clarity. You also seem to fall into your own trap here too – but not drawing the linkages and synthesising them within your own research. In the Discussion, you usefully pull together Table 1 and describe it, but you need to draw out and relate to relevant theoretical frameworks in terms of implementation theory and out knowledge translation theory.

2. Related to the point above, I would suggest that you re-focus the paper in terms of an ‘instrumental case study’ – at the moment, the paper is focused specifically on the Canadian case. However, for publication in an International journal, I would think that the authors need to focus on the key lessons they have learned which may be ‘translatable’ for researchers and policy makers in many other parts of the world. It feels more like an intrinsic case study at the moment with learnings for people in public health in Canada, although I think there are some fairly major learnings for others jurisdictions – but these need to be drawn out and elaborated. This is where the theory may come in useful from the point above.

3. The section on Methods is, at present, rather short and in need of much more detail. In relation to the philosophy of the paper, I would think that if the authors want to ‘transfer their knowledge’, they need to provide much more details of the process and rigour of their study. In particular

   a. Sampling – how was sampling undertaken and on what basis? What kinds of managers and providers were sampled? Was any additional sampling undertaken (discrete, divers, extreme etc), as part of their constant comparative approach, in order to obtain data saturation?

   b. At the moment, it looks like all interviews and focus groups were undertaken as a ‘block’ – but we need to know more about the inductive processes used –
was the usual iterative approach taken whereby interviews fed into one another, therefore ontologically making sense in the qualitative tradition?

c. What was the methodological reason for both interviews and focus groups? Why both methods? What was hoped to be gained from the two different methods, and was this the case?

d. Where did the interview questions come from?

e. Details of the data collection – how long did the interviews and focus groups last? Was there a difference between length, quality and depth of telephone vs in-person data collection?

f. Need much more detail on data analysis – it all seems very mechanistic at the moment, with all authors doing everything – but in my experience of attempting to do this, it has lead to lots of divergence in terms of analysis, which we have then either come to consensus about or retained the different perspectives in analysis – how did the authors deal with this? What part did pre-existing theory come into play – it feels rather like an attempt at discrete stages of grounded theory, but one would assume that the authors based the interview questions on theory and at some level, analysed the data in relation to theory, but this is not clear in the paper.

Minor Essential

1. In the Introduction, only a very limited amount of key literature is cited, which needs addressing. I’m sure the authors are aware of many more relevant papers, but they need to make use of them to make their arguments stronger and more ‘evidence based’. In particular, the following 2 papers seem critical since they were qualitative studies aimed at understanding the ‘worlds’ of policy makers and researchers in terms of why knowledge translation was ‘difficult'


2. In the results, were there any differences in themes between different types of staff (managers, front line, STI staff, chronic condition staff, clinicians etc) or between ‘other’ characteristics of staff (e.g. gender, length of time worked in organisation, political ideology etc)?

3. The bottom part of page 11 and top half of page 12 is about the processes involved in the system, but it is not clear whether this has come from the data, or from the ‘insider knowledge’ of one or more of the authors – be clear

4. Page 13, line 3 – “may not be the commitment” – the preceding quote does not, in my view, lead to this statement – I couldn’t see anything in the quote that
questioned the person’s commitment – if the authors have data on this, I would suggest pulling some out

5. Page 13, the questions proposed in the first paragraph – is this an actual quote or are these questions posed by the authors? If a quote, make it clearer by showing the pseudonym

6. Page 13 – the quote in the middle of the page – it feels like the quote has gone under-analysed – I wasn’t sure what point the authors were trying to make with this quote – please draw out the sentinel points that you want to make.

7. Page 14, line 3 – I am not convinced that you have made a convincing argument that knowing “how or why” a program was implemented leads to a more successful implementation. It feels rather implied that this will somehow make a difference, but if there is evidence that it does, you need to provide this in the Introduction. Could it not just be the case that programs get successfully implemented all the time when the ‘providers’ have little or no engagement/knowledge about the overall intent of the programs? You’re obviously making a point that people need to ‘buy in’ to the program and therefore need to know about and believe in its purpose etc – but in order for a reader to ‘buy in’ to this, you need to provide evidence, otherwise this theme from your data seems ‘wobbly’.

8. Page 15 – first paragraph – does this come from your data or from your knowledge of the programme?

9. Page 17 – the first paragraph of the “but we already do that” – there are a few unsubstantiated claims – “that message never filtered down”, “there was frustration, perhaps even resentment” – please provide evidence for these statements

**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:** None