Reviewer's report

Title: Discriminant content validity of a Theoretical Domains Framework questionnaire for use in implementation research

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Reviewer: Rebecca Lawton

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports on an exercise carried out with nineteen academics who were asked to allocate 79 questionnaire items to the 14 domains of the Theoretical Domains framework (Cane et al.) and to indicate their confidence with the allocation. The questionnaire items were developed so that with the insertion of information about target, action, context and time, they would be applicable to a wide range of implementation projects.

The methodological approach seems sound and prospectively tests the discriminant content validity of a TDF questionnaire. However, I feel that there are too many uncertainties at this stage to warrant publication of this piece of work, without further follow-up work which tests the questionnaire in practice with a health professional sample. My particular concerns with this paper are as follows:

First, the judges, who were all academics were being asked to make judgements about abstract items which did not refer to a target, action, context or time. Sometimes the specification of target, action, context and time is very challenging, making a questionnaire that asks for specification of these elements difficult to operationalise in practice.

Second, although the items might have face validity for academics, a number of them seem quite complex and may not have the same meaning and therefore be responded to as anticipated by the academic audience. Thus, the discriminant content validity exercise reported here may become obsolete when the questionnaire is used in the field.

In summary, I think there are good foundations here for further development of the questionnaire, but I would recommend testing on a large sample of health professionals prior to publication of this stage of the work.

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 I have no competing interests.