Reviewer's report

Title: Patient involvement in healthcare improvement priority-setting: a cluster randomized trial

Version: 2 Date: 5 September 2013

Reviewer: Victoria Thomas

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1. Overall I found this paper to be extremely interesting both its methodology and results, and would wholeheartedly recommend it for publication without major or minor revisions.

2. The policy drivers for patient involvement are well rehearsed and it is extremely refreshing for the concept to be subject to appropriately scientific scrutiny. Furthermore, for that scrutiny to identify significant impact of patient involvement, and for that impact to have the potential for far wider policy decision-making, is both significant and important. I considered the question posed by the authors as both new and well-defined.

3. In addition, the ‘real world’ nature of the study strengthens the findings as replicable and applicable in other settings, and on a larger scale. The authors have also clearly stated the additional resource implications of patient involvement, both financially and in staff time and expertise. Inevitably this needs to be weighted against the benefits realised by the involvement, and, as implied in the Discussion section, investments are being made in other ‘prioritised’ areas which may not meet the needs or priorities of patients or professionals. I consider the methods to be appropriate and well-described, and in sufficient detail for the work to be replicated by others.

4. The data analysis and randomisation and control methodology are described well and the limitations of the study are clearly outlined.

5. I am not able to comment on whether the manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition, but the seniority and integrity of the researchers leads me to conclude that this is a strong likelihood.

6. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and are adequately supported by the data. The study found substantial influence of patient involvement in this work, and in addition, the sense of collaboration between health professionals and patients, seems to have conveyed an extra value to the project over and above demonstrating this influence.

7. The title and abstract accurately convey the findings of the study.

8. The writing is of a very good standard and therefore acceptable.

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.