Author's response to reviews

Title: Determinants of impact of a practice accreditation program in primary care: a qualitative study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Professor McKinstry,

We thank you very much for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. Furthermore, we would like to thank the reviewers for reviewing our manuscript ‘Determinants of change in a practice accreditation program in primary care: a qualitative study’. We carefully considered the comments of the reviewers and we feel sure the comments helped us to improve our manuscript. In this letter we respond point by point to all comments and describe all changes made in the manuscript.

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer's report
Title: Determinants of change in a practice accreditation program in primary care: a qualitative study
Version: 2 Date: 29 September 2014
Reviewer: Karen Fairhurst

Reviewer's report:
This is an interesting paper examining qualitatively the impact of a practice accreditation program in the Netherlands. It reports upon a qualitative study embedded within a cluster randomized trial of the program.

Major compulsory revisions
1. My major substantive issue with the paper is the clarity of the research question. The authors state the aim of the study as “to identify and map out determinants of change related to the practice accreditation program”. This is not unpacked in any further detail so we are left to wonder what the nature of the change might be e.g. sustained change in practice organisation, delivery of care, engagement with quality improvement activity, clinical outcomes etc. The framework used for analysis then suggests that the research question might be “what are the factors that influence the
implementation of the program or the quality improvement activities that arise out of the accreditation program”. The findings as reported tend to answer the question “what aspects of the program worked (or not) for which practices in what context”. In the discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study the authors state it contributes to a body of knowledge on determinants of outcome. The authors might consider re-defining their research question (and the title of the paper) and being consistent throughout the paper.

We agree with the reviewer our research question needs clarification and we therefore rephrased the title of our manuscript into ‘Determinants of impact of a practice accreditation program in primary care: a qualitative study’. In the abstract (line 36) and the introduction (line 92) we rephrased the aim and research question into ‘The aim of this study was to identify determinants of impact of the practice accreditation program, building on the experiences of primary care professionals who had participated in this program.’

2. The choice of interviews to explore the experiences, perception and behaviours of professionals participating in the program is appropriate. The sampling of professionals who had participated in the program is clearly appropriate however details of the eventual sample could be clearer. How many practices were invited to participate in the interview study? Was one interview carried out per practice. How was the person interviewed selected - i.e. did they self nominate?

We added explanatory information in our methods section, lines 134-135. 41 Practices were invited in the interview study, 33 interviews were held with one team member per practice with a coordinating role in the implementation of the practice accreditation program.

3. Data collection methods appear to be systematic. The analytic approach is comprehensive. Further detail of how the coded statements correlated to the steps in the accreditation program were then applied to the CFIR constructs is needed. The authors state that 8 interviews were “coded by all authors” – does that mean that the 3 step process was completed by all authors? How was consensus reached and how were discrepancies resolved?

We agree with the reviewer information on this topic was incomplete. We therefore added clarifying information in the data-analysis section (lines 147-149).
4. In terms of the presentation of results there was overall a lack of analysis. The reader was expected to accept at face value statements without corroborating evidence or analysis being presented. For example line 194 “implementing plans were experienced as a heavy burden as these are supplementary task in addition to daily practice” is not evidenced. In terms of analysis it would also have been appropriate to test if there were situations in which this was not burdensome, and what these situations were. Similarly the cost of the intervention (line 205) were perceived as high and the benefits were questioned in relation to the costs but the costs were not explicitly described (financial, time, resources etc). And similarly line 227 “participation in research projects etc ....provided a positive influence on implementation of the program” but the reasons for this were not explored.

The description of results sought a balance between detail and conciseness. As a response to this comment, we have added several quotes that corroborate key findings and added some more detail at the points that are indicated in the comment (lines 205-206, 220-223, 249-252).

Minor Essential Revisions
The paper contains a number of grammatical and syntactical errors which sometimes makes it difficult to read and these should be addressed. The following list is not exhaustive.

Line 76: positive effects
Line 93: participated in “the” accreditation program
Line 113: second component ....is based on this feedback.
Line 114: participants who
Line 139: the accreditation program
Line 160: All participants consented to recording
Line 164: Eight practices declined to participate in the study
Line 181: therefore should be
Line 193: other elements of the program such as
Line 197: consisted
Line 211: several participants defined the aims of their improvement plans so that the needs of patients could be met.
Line 219: as a contextual factor
Line 221: ...were, as training practices, connected...
Line 222: a positive influence
Line 241 : a factor associated with the enthusiasm
Line 265: unclear meaning
Line 276: more assistance from
Line 281: relating to quality of care
Line 292: benchmarks
Line 292: new sentence starting “A possible reason”
Line 305-306: syntax wrong
Line 309: the practice accreditation
Line 310: which assessor
Line 344: missing the
Line 359: regardless of the outcome of feedback
Line 367: demonstrates contrasting professional attitudes towards
Line 387: meaning of “late majority population” is unclear.

We adjusted the grammatical and syntactical errors and reread our manuscript in order to remove other errors.

I think the paper presents some potentially interesting findings but that these are underdeveloped in terms of addressing the aim of the paper perhaps because the research question remains somewhat unclear.

Following this comment we rephrased the aim and research question of our paper (line 92, lines 104-106).

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
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.

Reviewer 2
Reviewer: Wendy Nicklin
Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
The article needs extensive review of the language and grammar. Words are used that do not make sense, for example, line 146 and 167 - what does 'saturation' mean? This is not a word used in English within research. The grammar is very poor, some of the sentences do not make sense in English. The entire article needs to be rewritten and then reviewed again.

*We added a clarification of ‘saturation’ in the methods section under the data analysis heading, line 150.*
*Furthermore we addressed grammatical and syntactical errors as already mentioned above.*

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

We again would like to thank you for reviewing our manuscript. We feel these comments improved our manuscript and we hope that you will find it acceptable for publication in your journal.

On behalf of all authors,
Yours sincerely,

Dr. Elvira Nouwens