Reviewer’s report

Title: Qualitative evaluation of primary care providers experiences of a training programme to offer brief behaviour change counselling on risk factors for non-communicable diseases in South Africa

Version: 4 Date: 9 June 2015

Reviewer: Chris Keyworth

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for submitting your article reporting a qualitative study examining primary care providers perceptions of behaviour change counselling skills following a training intervention. This is certainly a timely piece of work given the burden that non-communicable diseases places on the healthcare system, particularly the focus on improving the knowledge and skills of primary care providers. Here are some points to help improve your manuscript.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract

Lines 60 and 70 - you mention 'ability' in the background section, and then 'confidence' in the results. Did you seek to assess both or was it more about 'confidence in their ability to..' Just a little clarification needed.

You need more detail in the methods section about the analytical approach used - i.e. Framework analysis.

Methods

Line 197-198 - please explain the scoring system. Does a low score represent a non-favourable evaluation of the training course?

Need to be clear about the type of analysis used. In the participants section (line 201) you mention that further interviews could be conducted if there were emerging issues. This is fine, but implies an iterative, more grounded theory approach. Yet you are using framework analysis. Did you need to include additional interviews? If you didn't I suggest dropping that line and saying how many people you approached for interview/how many people you interviewed.

Framework analysis is appropriate and well described. However there is a key issue here with regards to rigour that needs further explanation. One researcher conducted the interviews, analysed the transcripts and interpreted the findings. Is this correct? Did you use any methods such as researcher triangulation to interpret the data (i.e. more than one person looked at the data and interpreted findings, and a consensus reached) as is common in qualitative research. If not please justify why not.

Results
Clear and generally well reported however there just needs to be a little more signposting in terms of the organisation. For example you mention part of the analysis (line 238) involved looking for ‘themes’ in the data. You could include sub-headings with these major these to help orientate the reader.

Quotes - please provide ID numbers for each of the quotes - including those in table 2. It is a little difficult to determine who said what. I'm sure it is not the case, but the quotes could all be from the same people.

Discussion
Line 384 - 'another aspect of personal alignment is in helping staff to be good examples of a healthy lifestyle'. I am a little unsure what you mean by this. Could you clarify?

Discretionary Revisions
Abstract
Line 75 - when referring to 'skills' be specific in the type of skills you a referring to.

Background
Line 119 - Spell out WHO on first use
Line 122 - 'to handle their own underlying problems' I think this is too broad. What are you referring to here? Are you talking about psychological co-morbidities that often accompany long-term conditions?

Line 131 - please explain the term 'role-players'

Line 146 - here would be a good place to explain the basic principles of motivational interviewing to orientate the reader

Discussion
Generally well written - I like the linking to the wider research field. Could you make more explicit link back to motivational interviewing which is a key part of this study. The specific ingredients of motivational interviewing may explain some of the positive feedback you have received in terms of skill acquisition.

Line 425 - when talking about training, be specific - do you mean behaviour change skills?

Line 431 - please reference the ichange4health programme To strengthen the implications section further you could also make reference to recognised behaviour change techniques from the literature. See:


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'