Reviewer’s report

Title: Community pharmacy integration within the primary care pathway for people with longterm conditions: a focus group study of patients’, pharmacists’ and GPs’ experiences and expectations

Version: 0 Date: 16 Oct 2018

Reviewer: David Cosgriff

Reviewer's report:

Thanks for the opportunity to review your work. It was both an interesting read and relevant to primary care.

It was really useful when you explained the contractual framework in England as this helped explain much of the rest of the paper to an international audience.

I have made a few major suggestions along with some minor comments.

Major

- The term ‘signposting’ may not be understood outside of the UK. I needed to google it to understand what it meant (after asking a community pharmacist who did not know) and it appears it’s mainly used in British resources. Given your paper is relevant to people outside the UK I think it’s worth explaining this term.

- You talk about "marketing theories" in general and that they have been applied to primary healthcare. It’s not clear from what you’ve written if marketing theories in general have been applied to primary healthcare or if the 7 P’s approach has been applied. Would be useful to refer to an application of this approach in similar research, or that a (specific, named) similar theory has been applied to similar research.

- In your theoretical framework you state the 7 Ps marketing mix was used. Why was this chosen? It is worth justifying your choice. This is not to say it’s an unreasonable choice but merely that the reader can't tell why it was chosen.

- Was there any inducement given to participants?

- Consider removing "based on when theoretical data saturation was expected to be achieved" I don’t think it adds anything as true saturation wouldn’t be achieved with two focus groups for each profession. Later you could instead discuss if you achieved saturation for at least your key themes. I think it’s overselling the research to suggest that you tested the patient and GP questions with one focus group each and then with a second achieved data saturation. This is an exploratory study that will guide future research so saturation isn’t expected.
At times you make statements which I'm sure would be reflected in your research but don't provide evidence of this. You say 'Conversely, pharmacists underestimated patients' support for them and perceived that they preferred GPs and nurses to manage their LTCs'. A quote from your research is needed to back this statement up particularly as it's a counterpoint to your main argument. Similarly, the subtheme pharmacy staff involvement needs a pithy quote from your work that backs up your stated results.

Your limitations section didn't address the fact you deliberately recruited pharmacists who had worked in pharmacies with these type of programs. Instead of playing down the limitations you could suggest how future research could be targeted (e.g., Future research might benefit from the opinion of a wider range of pharmacists - then your 'limitation' becomes a vessel to guide future research. This would be a much stronger sentence than 'some GP and patient participants reported to regularly interacting with community pharmacies' which doesn't ameliorate any suspicions of bias. Although its true having on research code is a limitation its worth reflecting that two of you were present in each of the focus group which adds some rigor. Two of the authors are pharmacists - did this provide any limitations, or alternatively provide unique insights?

Minor

You may wish to consider using patients with type 2 diabetes/respiratory illnesses rather than type 2 diabetes/respiratory patients as it highlights you see them as more than a diagnosis.

The last sentence in your abstract methods should read "data was analysed using thematic analysis" rather than were.

In the abstract results when you say "however all recommended promoting community pharmacy services locally and nationally" it's not clear to the read which group (i.e., pharmacists, patients, GPs) you mean by all.

This sentence is confusing to read 'The increasing population of patients with long-term conditions (LTCs) poses particular challenges for healthcare providers due to high levels of morbidity, healthcare costs and GP workloads'.

This sentence 'The characteristics patients were selected on were that they had one or more of the following common long-term conditions, for which community pharmacy services already exist (e.g., medication reviews; health checks [blood pressure, cholesterol tests etc.], influenza vaccinations, smoking cessation): type 2 diabetes and respiratory conditions (asthma/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD))' might read better as "...had one or more of diabetes, COPD, asthma..."

-where you say "This involved ensuring appropriate medication usage, educating patients on their medications, double-checking perceptions and referring patients to GPs if necessary" its worth mentioning what you mean by perceptions.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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