Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving early detection initiatives: a qualitative study exploring perspectives of older people and professionals

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Reviewer: Alex Hall

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article which addresses an important topic, and with some revisions it could make a useful contribution to the literature.

The authors use the term 'older people' throughout the article - I wonder if the term 'older adults' is the more accepted term?

The authors set out the rationale for the study and the aims are clearly stated. There is a need to provide a clearer definition of 'early detection initiatives'. I assume these initiatives are the first of the two groups of initiatives (lines 62-63) but this would benefit from being more explicit.

The background to the study could be enhanced with some further exploration of the concept of frailty, and the challenges and variation in defining frailty. The authors state that frailty is a multidimensional concept (lines 51-53) but this could do with a little more exploration and more explicit linking to the text in lines 72-76 which states that initiatives might only focus upon one dimension of frailty. This would then allow a more critical analysis of the findings from studies which have evaluated early detection initiatives - i.e. have some initiatives been found to be genuinely clinically ineffective, or is it that they have been misaligned with the dimension of frailty that they purport to address?

I am not sure what 'proactive' elderly care is (lines 94-95) and I suggest that this term would benefit from further explanation.

The sampling strategies for both stages are clearly described. However, it appears that the study was carried out with 36/83 older adults who signed up to participate. If I am reading this correctly, it means that there were nearly 50 older adults who signed up to participate, only to then be denied the chance to express their views. I am concerned about the ethical implications here and this needs addressing further.

The tables providing the participant demographics are clear, but the accompanying text in the manuscript simply repeats a lot of the detail that is in the tables - this text could be largely removed.
The full interview topic guides for both stages of data collection are missing. The authors have provided a summary of topics addressed, but the full guides are particularly important as the authors state that the stage one guide was developed from the different domains of frailty (see also comments re. further exploration of the concept of frailty in background section), and also contributed to the analysis framework. Following on, I would expect to see the final analytic framework (at least the major themes and their relationships to one another). As it stands, without the full topic guides and the analytic framework, it is not clear where the themes presented under each research question came from or how they align with those specific research questions. This is part of a wider issue in which I wonder whether the authors may have been too quick to align their results to their research questions. I can understand why the authors have presented their results in three sections corresponding to the three research questions, but at times the analysis feels underdeveloped, for example:

* Some of the themes appear more like lower-level codes and it is not always clear how they relate to one another - e.g. substantial overlap between 'mobility' and 'sense of purpose and autonomy'.

* The analysis presented is at times contradictory: under research aim/question #1, it is stated that some respondents feared cognitive decline (line 263) or high costs of home adaptations (lines 342-343), yet under the research aim/question #2, it is stated that almost all respondents never worry about the future (lines 414-415). I cannot see any analysis that explored this contradiction.

* The results presented for research aim/question #3 show professionals saying that information provision is important, but this is not linked to earlier data presented under aim/question #2 about how older adults may prefer to receive information.

Another way of structuring the results section might have been around more developed higher-order themes, which could then have been brought back to explicitly address the three research aims/questions in the discussion section. I am not necessarily suggesting that the authors carry out a reanalysis and restructure at this point, but I do think that this paper would benefit from some clarity around findings that cut across the research questions. It may be that some linking text in the results section might help the reader see how certain themes relate to other themes.

The authors draw out some interesting analysis in the discussion section (e.g. discrepancies between older adults' and professionals' views about self-sufficiency - lines 552-554), but the section is repetitive (these discrepancies are again cited in lines 635-638). I would suggest that the implications for policy and practice section could be amalgamated with the first part of the discussion section as this is the more discursive aspect to the paper.

Overall, this is an interesting article which has the potential to make a useful contribution to an important area of research literature. More clarity about the analysis process, and a deeper
analysis/more explicit drawing out some of the underlying commonalities and discrepancies between the three research aims/questions, would be of great benefit to the reader.

**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

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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