Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding preferences for type 2 diabetes mellitus self-management support through a patient-centered approach: a 2-phase mixed methods study

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Reviewer: Guendalina Graffigna

Reviewer's report:

I read with great interest the paper entitled Understanding preferences for type 2 diabetes mellitus self-management support through a patient-centered approach: a 2-phase mixed methods study. This manuscript reports the result of a mixed methods study on Type 2 Diabetes patients aimed at exploring their needs and preferences of engagement. Although the goal of better engaging diabetes patients in self-management is more and more a shared goal for scientists and clinicians, shared guidelines to achieve this goal have still to come. Further studies dedicated to illuminate diabetic patients preferences towards educational programs able to engage them in self-management are thus welcome. In this light the present study addresses an up to date and original research question. Furthermore the study has the value of involving a real clinical population and with a mixed method design.

However the study, as it stands, presents some limitations that do not make it publishable at present and need further attention

1. The idea of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the study design is a strength. The methodology of the first qualitative phase of the study is well sounded and well described. However the results section related to the qualitative interviews is quite disappointing. The main findings are described in a fairly superficial way and they do not appear particularly new and insightful. A deeper description and argumentation of the themes emerged from the qualitative analysis would be thus worthy. I suggest the authors to better structure this paragraphs in sub sections, in order to elucidate the different topics spontaneously reported by patients and emerged in the analysis. Finally more quotes from patients need to be reported in order to make more transparent the analytical process

2. It is not clear how the questionnaire of the quantitative phase of the research emerged from the qualitative results: these two sections have to be better linked

3. The limit of the quantitative phase of the research relate on the absence of validated measure used in the questionnaire. In particular, the research didn't explore the engagement profile and attitude of the patient interviewed: this would have added much insight to understand preferences and priorities for targeted educational interventions. It would have been
extremely interesting, indeed, to articulate patients' need and preference towards interventions in the light of their "patient engagement base line'. I'm aware that at this stage it is not possible to collect additional data to describe the level of interviewed patients engagement. However, authors should at list motivate the choice of not including in the questionnaire a validated patient engagement measure (such as the Patient Activation Measure - Hibbard et al. 2004, or the People Health Engament Scale - Graffigna et al. 2015) This lack should also be mentioned among the limitations of the study

4. The introductory section of the paper is nicely written and the study objectives are well positioned within the patient engagement debate. However, the story line related to patient engagement is fairly missed in the discussion section. I suggest the authors to better read their findings in the light of the ongoing debate about patient engagement and about the characteristics that - according to the literature - an intervention able to better engage type 2 diabetes patients in self-management should present. This will also be useful to highlight the innovative contribution of this study and to strengthen its findings

Due to present limitations I advise the authors to make major revisions to their manuscript before being considerable for publication

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.

No

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If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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