Reviewer's report

Title: Ethnographic process evaluation in primary care: explaining the complexity of implementation

Version: 2
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Reviewer: Lawrence Palinkas

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This manuscript provides a nice, practical explanation of how ethnographic methods may be used to collect information on implementation process. Grounding this information in the context of an implementation study is a nice touch and helps to illustrate how decisions are made about how to collect information on implementation process. Some of the elements of the paper that were especially gratifying to see include the discussion of the insider/outsider perspective of the research team and site coordinators, and the discussion of the practicalities of time and money involved in collecting and transcribing data. The importance of the collaborative relationship between the ethnographers and the site coordinators is also important and provides a nice illustration of one form of community-based participatory research.

Some suggestions for improving the manuscript are as follows:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Ethnographic methods are not only useful for examining the process of implementation, but the context in which it occurs. This is especially important in implementation research given the inherently limited generalizability of most implementation studies. It would be helpful if the authors provided some discussion of how context may be understood using ethnographic methods.

2. Some illustrations of data collected and how they were analyzed would be helpful. For instance, in describing the ECCO survey, it would be helpful to know what intriguing results were found and how clinic leadership used the summaries in their quality improvement efforts. How do clinic documents reveal the constantly changing landscape?

3. Along the same lines, the manuscript is quite detailed in describing techniques of data collection, but offers little insight on how these data are analyzed. Some more discussion of standard procedures for analyzing ethnographic data would be helpful.

4. The authors mention on p. 4, line 133 that they “modified traditional ethnographic data collection methods.” What methods are they referring to (perhaps provide a reference or two), and how and why they were modified?

Minor essential revisions
5. Perhaps more can be said about how the site coordinators were trained to collect ethnographic data. The manuscript details the experience of training them to keep diaries, but training in other data collection techniques is not mentioned.

6. The authors mention how well received they were at the clinics on p. 5, lines 162-164. However, this also raises the question of potential social response bias. How do or should researchers address this possibility?

7. Mention is made on p. 8, line 292 of staff having the freedom to request that the recorder be turned off. Has this ever happened and how did the interviewers deal with the situation (i.e., did they collect any data and if so how)?

**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.