Reviewer’s report

Title: Whole-system change: case study of factors facilitating early implementation of a primary health care reform in a South African province

Version: 2  Date: 10 October 2014

Reviewer: FRANCESC XAVIER GOMEZ-OLIVE CASAS

Reviewer’s report:

• Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

Page 8 last paragraph I would change first sentence to “In this paper we are presenting the contextual factors and implementation...”

Page 17, Substitute “Their” with “HST”

Page 29, second paragraph I would add “Province” to “North West”

• Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Page 11 I would spell out HST and UWC as they are South African organisations and may not be obvious for readers outside South Africa. Maybe include these acronyms in the list of abbreviations.

Page 13. In the first paragraph of the results it is presented the NGO who collaborated with the DoH. I would do a proper explanation and spell out in page 11 and then use HST through the whole paper instead of NGO partner.

Page 13, end of first paragraph, the authors should give more detail on where “see later” refers to in the manuscript.

Page 13, second paragraph I would avod the phrase “perhaps most striking” and change it to something more objective as this is still in the results.

Page 16, spell out DHS and maybe include it in the list of abbreviations.

Page 25 at the end of the results I would suggest to the authors to include a summary table of strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of this new system.

• Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Page 12 in the first paragraph it is not clearly stated whether the informed consent included that interviews were going to be recorded and how interviewees would be kept anonymous.

Page 18, first paragraph, it would help the reader to know what was considered a young children and which chronic diseases were included and which approach was used to know a person was suffering from such a condition.

In the discussion there are no references to other experiences in South Africa or
other southern Africa country. If other similar experiences exist it would be interesting to have a paragraph or two comparing implementation processes, successes and failures.

In the conclusions it would be important to have a final authors comment, opinion or recommendation for the South African DoH related to whether implement this plan in the other South African provinces and why.

**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