Reviewer's report

Title: A process-based framework to guide NP integration into primary healthcare teams.

Version: 2
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Reviewer: Jill Thistlethwaite

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The topic of this paper is of high and topical interest. I feel that there are several areas in the paper that require more detail and that more use could be made of the rich data that were obviously collected during the course of the study. It may be that you are planning other papers to report on the data but at present this particular paper makes a large jump from your description of the methodology and methods to the recommendations. I was left wondering where most of your data to support the recommendations were.

Major compulsory recommendations

The paper focuses on the role and integration of nurse practitioners in Canada. However the journal is read by a global readership therefore more detail is required about the context of practice and the nature of the NP role in Canada, as these may not be familiar to all readers. So the following definitions should be supplied:

Primary care (this varies between countries some of whom use ‘primary health care’ as well)
Nurse practitioner - you give the N American definition – please define scope of practice of the NP particularly in primary care
Primary care teams in your context.
Hospital-based primary care clinics....

Literature review

The defining features of realist reviews and approaches include exploring mechanisms acting in contexts to produce outcomes. Pawson and Tilley (1997) clearly stated that, in a realist inquiry, the researchers’ theory is the subject matter, and data collection is there to confirm, refute or refine that theory. However you do not provide any middle order theories that you test with your data. You do not mention mechanisms either so I think you need to reconsider what you mean by a realist review as presented in the paper.

I am not entirely sure of the purpose/research question for the literature review to gain an understanding of the factors and mediating variables that influence the effectiveness of a complex organizational-level intervention in general –or specifically about NPs because of the database you used?
P 7-8 Please explain 'we relied on the theme structure of the database’ – did you use a search syntax? (you mention this later in terms of how this database was complied but how you searched is not clear and needs to be addressed here when mentioning your first search: it is not clear what the process was)

What were the specific inclusion/exclusion criteria and please explain your decision to start with papers from 2000 - is this when NPs were first employed in Canada?

Explain the scientific validity score in more detail – was this a reliable measure? Why search from 2010 – 2012 in the other databases? Did the first database include all of 2009?

You state that themes were selected or emerged – were other themes rejected?

Explain your use of narrative – as there is a narrative synthesis approach as well for reviews which differs from the realist approach.

Line 70: You state that documents had to address NP deployment, practice models, or integration processes – what types of papers did you include: those with empirical data? Opinion? etc.

Line 90 'At this point, the interdisciplinary expertise of the research team (which included RNs, MDs, and experts in organizational theory and health administration) was applied to identify new documents on an ad hoc basis'

Line 92: 'The draft narrative summary for each theme was then used as the analytical framework for the implementation analysis.'

This process needs explaining – how were these document identified? How many? Up till what time? Readers should be able to repeat your search strategy but there is not enough detail given.

The qualitative case studies

For recruitment how did you decide that integration was successful? What does this look like?

You carried out about 5 interviews per case? How were ‘actors’ chosen? Were the data reviewed by more than one team member?

'This researcher produced a narrative case summary structure around the five themes identified in the literature review. Those summaries were discussed in team meetings (I presume this refers to the research team and not the case team?), and cross-case insights were identified. In a second step, we produced six narrative theme-based cross-analyses of the cases to synthesize the contribution of empirical case-study evidence to each theme. (were these themes solely based on the review themes or did new themes arise?)

Line 124 'to be able to cross-validate and inform the analysis by comparing the evidence derived from the literature to actual practices': wasn’t the original
literature derived from practice as well?

Results (findings)

I was surprised that there were no qualitative data from your interviews presented here. The reader has to take on trust your findings without quotes.

The findings are related to the literature and referenced but some references predate 2000 so you reviewed other papers as well as those from your literature review - which presumably then was only for the purposes of generating your themes.

Line 179 The actual NP role needs to be determined in collaboration with the person hired – shouldn't this be done during the hiring process?

Line 208 'Evidence to support more instrumental recommendations on how to create such a consensus is much weaker' – there is a wider literature on how teams may do this (from business etc)

Line 216 – what size teams have you looked at? Need more details.

'Multiple framing of interdisciplinary and collaborative practice in the literature (including IPP and IPCP)' - why have you chosen these definitions? And then you use the term 'interprofessional collaboration' - need to be consistent with terminology.

What models did your 6 teams use?

Line 284: 'Overall our results suggest that no one patient care model is inherently better than the others' but you do not provide evidence for this statement from your data.

Line 321 'our case analyses suggest the optimal number is probably between two and four' – on what is this based?

Liner 338: 'At the practical level, available evidence on the topic can be summarized into three themes' – where does this evidence come from?

Line 334: 'developing collaboration among clinicians, whether inter- or intraprofessional, requires time, in particular for mutual trust to develop'. Reference needed.

'Finally, collaborative practice does not always emerge spontaneously'. does it ever? Reference needed.

Line 355: 'The literature on training for physician–NP collaboration recommends a variety of learning strategies, such as case discussions, scenario building, journal clubs, and discussions around clinical and organizational issues' - which literature are you referring to here? Your review? Other?

Line 382. 'These are competencies that develop over time and depend on the quality of interprofessional collaboration and the comprehensiveness of the
patient care model.' Reference needed.

Lines 417 – 422 – References needed.

You need to discuss the limitations of this approach.

Minor essential revisions
The first statement references only N American sources – good to have some others here.

The journal uses Vancouver as a referencing system with citations numbered not the APA system that you have used. All the referencing needs attention. And I do think that the papers found in your searches need to be included - possibly as a separate list if you have not cited them in the paper.

RNs MDs: needs to write out in full first time used.

Line 167 ensuring that most team member are aware of this information. – surely this should be all (and members not member)

Line 171 - to reflect on current practices’ strengths and weaknesses
Rather - To reflect on practices’ current strengths and weaknesses

Line 204 – each members’ = each member’s

Line 282 - primary care physicians’ limited experience and of working collaboratively. (need and?)

Line 297 Physicians’ (does not need capital P)

Line 459 - PEPPA model - write out in full and explain what this is.

Eisenhower quote needs a reference

Need a reference for role theory

Discretionary revisions
For this type of approach I suggest that 'findings' is more appropriate than 'results'.
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/