Reviewer's report

Title: Empowering patients through eHealth: gathering relevant evidence from local experiences

Version: 2 Date: 20 April 2015

Reviewer: Young-Taek Park

Reviewer's report:

To authors
This manuscript presents findings from various E.U. projects on empowering patients through several eHealth initiatives. It also has an observational study design. Specifically, this study describes the challenges of various eHealth initiatives funded by E.C. and summarizes and suggests three lessons acquiring from the initiatives. It has some incremental values for those who are interested in e-Health programs such as personal health records system or tele-health or tele-medicine. However, this study has some limitations as follows;

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Author submitted this manuscript as research paper. But I think this is more closed to case-study because the manuscript is just about description on challenges of various eHealth initiatives funded by E.C. and summarizes and suggests three lessons. There is not any quantitative data analysis as well. So, it is hardly to accept as research paper. I think it fits well in the case study paper.

2. The title of this manuscript is “Empowering patients through eHealth: gathering relevant evidence from local experiences”. I understand this paper is about the challenges from various eHealth projects funded by E.C. and the ways of overcoming those challenges, which is descriptively written. There is no data analysis. There is not any evidence that patients obtained empowering through these eHealth initiatives. My question is: what does mean by “gathering relevant evidence”? If you think that the tile is inappropriate, then please change it to others reflecting the comments above. If you do not agree with me, then please defend against my comments.

3. There are many important concepts such as “empowering patients”, “patient activation”, etc. Among them, “empowering patients” and “eHealth” are especially important because they are appeared in the title of the manuscript. Although so, there are not any definitions on them. Please define them by your own wards at the beginning of introduction section.

4. This manuscript is based on 9 EC eHealth pilot projects. By judging from the services offered, most of eHealth initiatives cited by authors seem to be related with Personal Health Record (PHR) Systems. EC government may want to know patients’ use of PHR systems and impact of the system on quality of care or health outcomes. E.C. has conducted the regular HER survey including PHR
systems (see eHealth Benchmarking III, European Hospital Survey 2014, etc.) and the OECD has also conducted “Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Benchmarking Project” including PHR systems. The 9 EC’s eHealth projects may have their own purpose, but there is not any information on that. I think that the table 1 would not enough. So, please provide detailed information on e-Health projects cited by the manuscript. The following information should be included in another Table (e.g. Table 3): project name, project period, objectives, major outcome variables, lists or index of important explanatory variables. They would provide useful information to readers.

Minor Essential Revisions
5. The manuscript does not follow the manuscript submission guidelines of BMC Health Services Research, especially, the references lists of the manuscript at the end of the paper. Please correct them.

6. Regarding the reference number 13 in line#146 and #566, I have never seen this kind of reference citation in the academic field: “details are omitted to do not identify authors”. If you cannot provide correct and clear information, please delete the related sentence and the reference.

7. In line#174 and line#266, abbreviation TAM appears several times. Please use only an abbreviation after its first appearance.

8. In line#101, the abbreviation, EU, appears interchangeably with EC. Please use one term.

9. The abbreviation, PAM, does not appear in the main manuscript. Please spell it out wholly such as “Patient Activation Measure (PAM)”(clearly write it).

Discretionary Revisions
10. Figure 1 in the last page of the manuscript, what does mean by “out of scope”? What is “out of scope”? Do you provide a clear definition of inclusion or exclusion criteria or guideline on it in the manuscript? In addition, I don’t understand what means n=286. Do you need this to analyze? If not, delete them. Once again, if authors descriptively define the meaning “patient empowerment”, then they do not need this Figure 1. So, delete Figure 1 after defining “patient empowerment” descriptively.

11. In line#304, please take out “etc.” from the manuscript. The manuscript in academic field rarely uses this word.

12. The manuscript writing is wordy and verbose. For example, authors said that “patient empowerment” is umbrella concept (line#424) and tried to define it with “patient activation” in the method section. However, patient activation is also unclear and seems to be another “umbrella term”. Authors spent large portion of manuscript with searching similar term (see from line#141 to161). I don’t know why they do this. It would be enough if authors descriptively define the meaning of “patient empowerment”. My suggestion is that: define key important concept with your own words and delete wordy sentences. If you need 3-4 references,
then use them.

Thank you!

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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