Author’s response to reviews

Title: Personal and Standardized Coordination in Implementation of Integrated Care

Authors:

Justin K Benzer (justin.benzer@va.gov)
Irene E Cramer (irene.cramer21@gmail.com)
James F Burgess Jr (james.burgess@va.gov)
David C Mohr (david.mohr2@va.gov)
Jennifer L Sullivan (Jennifer.sullivan@va.gov)
Martin P Charns (martin.charns@va.gov)

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Thank you for considering our manuscript. We address your preliminary concerns below.

1. **First, a clearer definition of how the authors are conceptualizing integrated care needs to be provided along with adequate references.**
   We provide a current definition of integration (line 56-59), and clarify that we focus on the organizational-level component of integration (line 59-60).

2. **Second, the background and discussion sections are not adequately referenced and thus do not engage with the relevant literature.**
   We have increased our references with regard to integration between primary care and specialty care (references 6-9), and highlight in the discussion how the study contributes to the literature on organizational-level coordination in primary care (references 6, 29-33).

3. **Third, BMC HSR is an international journal and the authors do not provide an adequate description of the VA, who they serve, and the nature of service provision in the department (in fact, the country of study is not even mentioned). This description needs to be characterized in relation to US health care more generally and the push towards integrated care so that international readers are able to assess the transferability of the findings to other contexts.**
   We have added a section on the study setting to the methods (line 108-114).

4. **Fourth, there is no explanation of or justification for why the 8 VA medical centres of focus were selected (are they novel sites or do they represent VA health care in general).**
   We have clarified in the participants section that these medical centers were a convenience sample that were selected for a management evaluation of PC/MHI by VA leaders. No attempt was made to ensure that these sites were representative of VA.

5. **Fifth, and quite importantly, this is an interview-based study and yet direct quotations are not included in the findings section. This either needs to be justified or quotes need to be added in.**
   Our institutional review board judged that we could not provide quotations. The rationale was that the participants did not know that their interviews would be published. The IRB judgment was that we could use paraphrase but not quote respondents. We have worked to present the results in a way that uses the paraphrased reports effectively. However, we recognize that this will be surprising to reviewers. Therefore, we have specified this restriction in both the abstract and the methods (line 148-149).