Reviewer’s report

Title: Mapping infectious disease hospital surge threats to lessons learnt in Singapore: A systems analysis and development of a framework to inform how to DECIDE on planning and response strategies

Version: 0 Date: 12 May 2017

Reviewer: Susan E. Coffin

Reviewer’s report:

In this manuscript, health services researchers from Singapore present the process and results of their efforts to derive a multi-dimensional model of public health and hospital responses to surges related to outbreaks of infectious diseases (ID surges). Using qualitative data extracted from semi-structured interviews and narrative accounts, the authors derived elements of a response model and reconciled redundancies of processes embedded in current response protocols due to disparate terminology and decision-making processes. I found both the process used by these investigators, as well as their findings, to be very interesting. I suspect readers of BMC Health Service Research would feel the same. Although, I do have some concerns about the generalizability of their findings, I believe the process these investigators used could be of great value to other public health agencies seeking to examine and improve their current ID surge response plans.

COMMENTS:

1) In the methods, the authors specify the gender of the researchers who performed the stakeholder interviews. This seems both unnecessary and inappropriate.

2) Please explain how individuals (particularly clinicians and nurses) were selected for participation. Was invitation to participate extended to specific individuals based on a particular facet of their professional responsibilities?

3) The term "snowballed" seems like jargon.

4) The Methods section includes some information that should be in the Results such as the age of the interviewees (and it is unnecessary to state the standard deviation around this number in the prose since it is presented in Table 1).

5) To make this report more valuable to the reader, I suggest the authors make their interview guide available as an appendix. This could be done electronically so as not to take up pages of the print journal.
6) The Abstract says that "key policy literature" was used in the iterative design of this model. There is no mention of how this literature was identified and exactly how it was introduced.

7) The Results section does not seem clearly organized and it is difficult to extract the real "findings" or "results". For example, the first part has the subtitle "Elaboration of hospital surge events" and presents summaries with illustrative quotes for 4 different ID surge events the system experience. It is not clear what the investigators captured from these descriptions and how these findings (whatever they were) contribute to their model building.

8) Overall, the Results section is too long and the investigators do not seem to have done enough summarizing of their findings so a reader can understand exactly what they got out of these interviews and how they applied it to their stated process of model building with iterative refinement of design.

9) The 1st sentence of the paragraph on pg 11, line 137 is not clear.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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