Reviewer’s report

Title: No one's playing ball: A study of knowledge exchange in public health partnerships

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Reviewer: Judith Bernstein

Reviewer's report:

This article is an interesting presentation of perspectives on a widespread and persistent problem in public health. Despite lip service to the importance of partnership, tokenism is more common than full participation. We all attend endless meetings, but transparency is often lacking, and territorial concerns trump collaboration. There are a few areas where additional material or revisions could strengthen this article.

Title:

The title is compelling, but conflicts with the actual findings. Results suggest that people are playing ball to some degree, just not to a sufficient degree. Also the findings include a very important point about silos. What about "It's hard to play ball: A qualitative study of knowledge exchange and silo effects in public health"?

Abstract:

Nothing is included in the abstract about analysis procedures. Add a sentence.

P. 14 description of silos

The two-edged sword described here - silos as effective teams vs. silos as vehicles for protectionism - is very interesting. This conflict could be followed up more clearly in the discussion (p. 17) with a review of perceived benefits of working in silos. Habits of work persist in public health in the face of calls for change because we are accustomed to doing things this way, but usually they also persist because they serve some secondary gain. Maintaining territory (sustaining the silo approach) happens because it brings tangible benefits to those who are being asked to change. Those benefits might be instrumental (getting things done faster in the absence of consultation); protectionist (no need to share mistakes and greater opportunity to claim successes) or bureaucratic (protecting authority at the the top of the hierarchy). As a reader I was hoping for a deeper discussion about the persistence of silos. Is there any more information that
could be mined from the thematic material for this purpose? Any references that could be made to existing styles of work in public health? Anything from the organizational literature that would add to an understanding of the difficulties experienced in building coalitions?

The RE-AIM framework

Questions were derived from RE-AIM. The framework could also be used for contextualizing results in the discussion.

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

Yes

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

Unable to assess

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

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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