Reviewer’s report

Title: South African Primary Health Care Allied Health Clinical Practice Guidelines: The big picture

Version: 2 Date: 21 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Neil Drummond

Reviewer’s report:

I can see that the authors have tried to respond to my previous comments. In my judgement though the paper is still really about the state of play (a phrase now reiterated many times by the authors) of allied health services in South African primary care, rather than about the development, use or effectiveness of clinical practice guidelines for allied health services. Under these circumstances the result currently meanders between the two themes.

I have two suggestions. One is that it reads to me as though the state of allied health care should form the core of the results section and the dearth of relevant CPGs should be the focus of the discussion, including commentary for policy and clinical practice. The authors do not provide an actual list of allied health clinical practice guidelines developed in South Africa by allied health professionals, or at least accepted as relevant by them. This would be a good piece of knowledge to disseminate. They make a passing observation that there is no Tier 1 component in their AH data, which should be a major point around which to organize the discussion.

An alternative would be to focus the results section on the CPG material and remove the "Role of AH in effective PHC" from there, focusing the discussion on these motivations for improving the number and quality of clinical practice guidelines for allied health care.

I think the paper needs reorganization. Whether that's a major or minor revision depends on one's point of view.

Figure 1 is illegible in my copy and even if it were legible it has no key to aid interpretation by the reader. Rather than being an example of SNA "analysis" it is really an example of SNA presentation.

Figure 2 is singularly unhelpful in that features that appear to be significant in the diagram aren't interpreted in the key. Do the different box shapes signify meaning? What about the borders? What does a dashed arrow mean? Why does it appear to have lost the bottom half of its left limb? What does a thin blue arrow mean and what a thin black one? If Tier 1 and 2 guidance produce tier 3 products how come they don't appear to in this diagram? Figures are supposed to help, but this one doesn't. Not me anyway.

Figure 3 does make a bit of sense (to me) but if the data reported indicates no tier 1 'presence' in the context of AH CPG SA PHC this diagram isn't based on the reported empirical data, it's a statement of preference for some future state. So why include it?
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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