Reviewer's report

Title: A Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding Partnership Experiences and Outcomes of Projects from an Integrated Knowledge Translation Funding Model in Rehabilitation

Version: 0 Date: 24 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Magnolia Cardona

Reviewer's report:

GENERAL COMMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to revise this manuscript on a very practical issue of process outcomes of research translation that is given limited attention in the published literature. These findings could be transferable to other fields beyond rehabilitation. Us readers need more of these pragmatic studies sharing lessons learnt and success factors for partnerships and highlighting issues requiring further efforts such as the infrequent measurement of sustainability.

This project is an important piece of work to inform processes, improve future planning of KT projects and prevent ineffective strategies by others. Many research and clinical groups can benefit from these methods and their findings.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The methods were sound with quantitative descriptive and thematic analyses, and the response rate to the quantitative survey appeared satisfactory. However, one focus group with only 6 researchers may not have been sufficient to reach saturation and more topics may have remained unexplored.

Figure 2 offers an interesting comparison between expected and actual impact. Original in principle. However, it is unclear from the methods how 'actual' impact was measured/assessed or defined by investigators to build this graph. Perhaps the word 'actual' should be reconsidered. Readers would benefit from a statement about this in the methods (i.e. self-perceived on the basis of...), in addition to the comment on the limitations section.

A gap that needed addressing was the perception of the less senior researchers about the partnership experience. These people are the crucial link in the chain that make outcomes happen and they were overlooked in this particular study. This needs to be acknowledged in the limitations of the study. Perhaps a sub-study could investigate their views and uncover some other issues of relevance.

The FGD guide was comprehensive. I enjoyed seeing the two-way approach to explore the impact of partnership on project outcomes and vice versa.
The interview protocol (additional file 3) looked exhaustive. Long interviews are less likely to attract participation of busy clinicians.

The emerging finding of the need for more widespread use of measurement frameworks and tools is an important one to obtain concrete evidence of success in IKT. However, the statement that there was insufficient time to measure long-term impact (line 396, page 15) may not be correct, since was one of the criteria for inclusion in the study (line 174, page 6) and the definition of sustainability encompasses 2+ years of initial implementation (line 408, page 15).

The language chosen to estimate the impact of the IKT initiative was appropriate "..has begun to make a contribution." "precursor to an ongoing and future change in clinical practice " as results of this study still have to be viewed with caution given the sample size and limitations above.

It was unfortunate that only 2 studies measured long-term impact and sustainability; and that few explored patient-oriented outcomes. I agree with the finding that decision-makers need to be included among the stakeholders consulted to ensure viability and sustainability. They should be the sponsors and champions promoting the intervention to motivate wider participation.

Perhaps authors could emphasize in their recommendation for the grants agency to incorporate this in the funding requirements for future grant awards, alongside their suggestion to fund projects longer than 12 months (as mentioned in lines 486-490, page 19) to allow time for 'robust and strategic preparation' that enables the culture of KT to set in.

While it is true that student participation as project leaders is not ideal, the suggestion that full-time clinicians should be the PLs (Lines 471-474, page 18) represents the end of a spectrum, which is not necessarily realistic (Table 5 sows this). If there is no organisational support quarantining time for clinicians to be involved in research (let alone be project leaders), then this recommendation is made in a vacuum. It would be important for authors to include a sentence about how they propose that clinicians become PLs/collaborators given the existing barrier. Finally, the assertion that sustainability plan should be based on existing theories and models is a bit abstract. Sustainability needs to be grounded on using locally relevant resources, customising policies, and educating staff on the benefits of readiness to change.

In sum, this study findings constitute a contribution to knowledge and are likely to assist future KT researchers, clinicians and funding agencies.
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.

No

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

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal

Do you want to get recognition for reviewing this manuscript?

Add a record of this review to Publons to track and showcase your reviewing expertise across the world’s journals. Signing up is quick, easy and free!

Yes