Reviewer’s report

Title: Re-energising the way we manage change in healthcare: The case for Soft Systems Methodology and its application to evidence-based practice

Version: 0 Date: 22 May 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

No - there are minor issues

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

N/A - no methodology

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

N/A - no experiments or analyses

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

No - there are major issues

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Probably - with minor revisions
PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: This paper describes and proposes exploration of the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) for managing change in healthcare, such as getting evidence into practice. I don't think anyone would argue that implementation in healthcare is simple and as such, efforts to achieve it need to be guided by models and methods that recognise and deal with the complexity of the situation. While an interesting approach, the paper would be improved if it presented the information in a more balanced manner, and provided further details in support of its application.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Given that one of the arguments of the paper is that this approach has been rarely applied to healthcare, it would be good to see further details of the 21 empirical studies of this approach that were mentioned as being found in PubMed. While a few details are provided, further information (including any measure of 'effect' or results of using the approach, any limitations of or problems identified in its use, etc) is needed. Towards the end of the paper (pg 13) the authors state that one of the aims of this paper was "to provide an overview of how SSM has been applied in healthcare." As this is a stated aim of the paper, providing details of the existing 21 studies becomes an even more crucial component of this paper. Suggest also stating this aim earlier in the paper, including in the abstract.

Elaboration of the claim that "it has been supported as a strong method for overcoming…." (pg 9, line 44) is also needed. Similarly, consider improving the balance of view about SSM that this paper provides as it only addresses the case for it.

Acknowledgement of, and brief discussion about, the other implementation models/frameworks/approaches that recognise the complexity of implementation and the need to adopt a systems perspective would also enhance this paper.

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.

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

Unable to assess

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.
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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

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No