Reviewer's report

Title: Trust and motivation in the health sector: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 19 September 2014

Reviewer: Narelle Patton

Reviewer's report:

When assessing the work, please consider the following points:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The question posed by the answers is new and opens up exploration of a new relationship between health worker levels of motivation and the development/existence of trusting relationships in health practice contexts. However, the paper lacks clarity around the definition and explanation of motivation, which makes the argument somewhat difficult to follow.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
The methods are clearly described and the databases searched would have provided a comprehensive set of literature on which to base this review.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
This question is not strictly applicable to a literature review. However the themes identified from the review are sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Again this question is not strictly applicable to a literature review. However, the findings could have been reported with increased clarity.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion and conclusions are adequately supported by the data. The presentation could benefit from improved structure to clarify the findings.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
It could be useful to more explicitly link trusting relationships with motivation and patient outcomes in the title.
The abstract adequately represents what has been found.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is of an acceptable standard. I have made some recommendations for improvement amongst my more detailed comments.
General comments
The authors are to be congratulated on their exploration of this important area. Their exploration of an interdependent relationship between level of motivation and trust in relationships adds new knowledge.

A significant finding of this review is the complex nature of trusting workplace relationships and the manner in which these relationships influenced or shaped health workers' motivation and consequent quality of performance. This is a very important finding as health workers' performance quality has direct implications for the health outcomes of those people seeking healthcare.

The selected databases would have provided a comprehensive literature set.

Article selection:
Paragraph 1: The full wording of the acronym HIC should be used prior to the first use of this acronym. The exclusion criteria are clear and reasonable and would not detract from the credibility of the findings.

Trust relationship with employing organisation
Paragraph 1: It is good to see the clarification of employing organisation in the opening sentence.

Trust relationships with the patients
This is a powerful section as it identifies the complexity of the trusting relationships in that the relationships with patients are influenced by the collegial relationships and contextual factors such as organizational resources.

Major compulsory revisions
I have noted that throughout the article the authors change their writing style from first to third person. I am not sure which is the preferred style for this journal but would suggest to the authors that they choose one style of writing and apply it consistently throughout.

Background:
1. Paragraph 1: I would like to see an explanation of who the health workers are. This is a very broad category of workers. Are you including the entire health workforce? This would mean doctors, nurses, allied health workers (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, pharmacists, allied health assistants and so on), hospital porters and administrative staff. It would be interesting to tease this out a little – how broad is this study and to what extent are the findings transferable to different disciplines? Throughout this paragraph morale and motivation are used interchangeably as if both terms mean the same thing. A sentence explaining the link between morale and motivation would assist.

2. Paragraph 2: The definition of motivation is clarifies what is meant by motivation. It would also be helpful to define your meaning of trust relationships.
3. Paragraph 3: This is a little confusing as extrinsic influences are listed and then more extrinsic influences are listed as affecting intrinsic motivation. I would have thought that motivation levels are an intrinsic phenomenon in that motivation levels belong to the individual. These could be influenced by extrinsic factors such as those listed in the paragraph and intrinsic factors such as resilience, self-efficacy, confidence and overall sense of wellbeing. This paragraph needs clarity around intrinsic and extrinsic influences on motivation.

4. Paragraph 4: This starts with the need to enhance morale – I would advise using the term morale and use the term motivation consistently throughout this paper to avoid confusion. This paragraph starts to differentiate extrinsic and intrinsic influences on motivation. I wouldn’t use the terms extrinsic and intrinsic as directly applied to motivation – the examples you provide are influences on motivation not motivation itself.

5. Paragraph 5: This paragraph also uses the description intrinsic motivation. I would recommend deleting the word intrinsic here and talk about motivation. For clarity in this paragraph instead of introducing the different dimensions I would recommend introducing three dimensions and then number the dimension – it will link better with the end of the paragraph where you mention three dimensions.

6. Paragraph 7: Perhaps include in the importance of this paper – health worker wellbeing, quality of health services and retention of health workers – this is important as it could be argued that experienced health workers have developed a level of expertise that is important to the quality of health service provision and that health workers are expensive to train/educate therefore there is also a financial incentive to health systems to retain experienced workers.

Methods:

7. This literature review did not explore the broad topic of motivation in general. I would recommend tightening the description of what you explored to include trust relationships in health. (The databases you used to search were health databases).

Major themes related to trust and motivation

8. Paragraph 2: Listing the four main trust relationships identified makes it easier for the reader to follow where you are going.

Trust relationships with supervisors and managers

9. Paragraph 1: In my experience the first sentence over simplifies the role of managers and supervisors. These people have responsibility for the efficient provision of high quality health services which while including guiding, assisting and supporting health workers also includes fiscal responsibilities in order to deliver health services in an efficient and cost effective manner. How did the poor quality of supervision practices affect the quality of care? It might also be useful to clearly differentiate managers and supervisors.

10. Paragraph 3: The link between motivation and poor performance is a
powerful finding. This would be strengthened by some examples of poor performance.

Trust relationship with employing organisation
11. Paragraph 2: Did the poor work conditions negatively affect patient care and performance? If so I would say so as it strengthens the power of the statement about patient care and performance.

Discussion
12. Why is it important to consider studies published in other languages? I would recommend clarification of the range of papers considered in this review and the thus the scope of the review to assist the reader to judge the transferability of the findings.

13. Paragraph 3: Good to see implications raised at the end of this paragraph. What is the difference between interpersonal and patient? I would suggest only distinguishing between interpersonal and organizational factors here. Instead of saying the review could not identify a hierarchy amongst the four trust relationships identified I would recommend stating this as a finding from the review in that no hierarchy exists.

14. Paragraph 4: I would recommend limiting this paragraph to influence of trusting relationships on the quality of patient care as this is a very powerful finding and represents the bulk of the content of the paragraph. Intention to leave is mentioned at the beginning and end of the paragraph without any discussion in between – this could be separated into another paragraph, as these are two very significant findings.

15. Paragraph 8: Consider revising use of the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as described earlier.

Conclusion
16. I would highlight the complexity of this issue as an important finding from this review.

Also implications for professional development activities for supervisors and managers and pre-entry health worker education programs could be considered. I would suggest recommendation of further research focused on further illuminating the complex relationship between health worker motivation, trusting relationships, health worker satisfaction and positive patient outcomes.

Discretionary revisions
Background
1. Paragraph 6: I would recommend replacing “could be” with “include”.

Quality review and data extraction and analysis:
2. Paragraph 1: Change the words “assist with” to “guide”
3. Paragraph 3: It would be useful to provide some examples to indicate the range of health workers represented in these studies (as suggested earlier). Without more specific information it is very difficult for the reader to judge the transferability of your findings.

Trust relationships with colleagues

4. Paragraph 1: The inclusion of the reference {51} as a number in the middle of the sentence is awkward. I would recommend reordering the sentence so the reference appears at the end.

Trust relationship with employing organisation

5. Paragraph 1: It is good to see the clarification of employing organisation in the opening sentence.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.