Author’s response to reviews

Title: Paramedics, poetry and film: health policy and systems research at the intersection of theory, art and practice

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Reviewer #1: Thank you for your careful addressing of the comments made by both reviewers. This is a lovely piece and I wish you well in your future endeavors to improve the conditions for the paramedics.

Author response: Thank you so much for your thoughtful review and comments!

Reviewer #2 (a): The authors have taken on board several of the comments and responded to all of the feedback. This is a difficult article to review because it is so unique and there are no clear frames of reference for this type of review. As the authors point out, it was submitted as an editorial, however HRH does not have guidelines for editorial submissions. Generally an editorial should respond to topical issues; present a concise synthesis of a topic which does not warrant a full review; and present a clear argument.
Author response (a): Thanks again for your comments. As you rightly point out, there are no specific BMC HRH guidelines for editorials. So, as a first step, we checked with the editors before submitting and were told this type of paper would/could be considered. In addition, we feel that this piece fits with the overall guidance that can be found on the website for a ‘short, narrowly focused article of contemporary interest’.

As previously noted, the piece is not intended to be an academic piece of work (in the traditional sense) – but, rather, to share our emerging experience of innovative and often not considered approaches to addressing human resources for health, and to provoke discussion.

Reviewer #2 (b): Because this is such an unusual, and non-commissioned, editorial it really needs to make its points clearly and strongly. While the text highlights the importance of art in illustrating important perspectives in a way that could otherwise lose impact through less expressive interfaces, I am still not convinced that the material is able to move the readers' experience beyond anecdote to a wider sense of knowledge or understanding. This is partly because the focus is largely on the mode of dissemination, rather than the experience of the receiver. The new text highlights ways that the videos were disseminated, and while it suggests that arts based methods can increase collaboration between participants and policy makers, there is no 'bridge' to move this activity forward. Further translation is required by the authors to move the reader and viewer into a position to either be able to respond to the material provided in a way that enables them to either how to use the same approach to inform research / policy or practice; or actually address the issues through research / policy / practice. While the authors suggest that this is a piece to inform discussion, more context, theory and signposting is needed to enable this work to provoke a valuable discussion.

Author response (b): Thanks for this point.

We included examples of how we are sharing our work to show that we are reaching a range of audiences and influencers. The buy in and enthusiasm for the work across the health department and the organic way in which community members are themselves organizing film screenings and discussions are measures that the films are impactful. Nonetheless, we do not suggest that policy has yet changed from these activities. However, drawing on broader policy theory we propose that these approaches may have both conceptual and instrumental impacts - which will require longer term tracking processes to confirm.

We have added in further points that seek to address your comment about “moving beyond anecdote to a wider sense of knowledge or understanding” in the Imagining possibilities through poetry and film: what are the implications for health policy and systems research? section.
Overall, our piece raises questions about ‘how’ art-based methods can be used to gather evidence on health workers lived experience - experience that is important in informing research / policy / practice. We accept that it does not consider if this approach to knowledge generation has more or less effect than other approaches - but that is not our intention. Instead, we seek to highlight the opportunities that arts-based methods offer, from the early stages of our work. We seek to provoke discussion and encourage the sharing of experience - as one step in a longer process of considering the value and possible limits of these methods.

Thanks for your careful consideration of this piece, we have taken on board many of your comments and feel this has made for a more interesting and thorough piece overall.