Author’s response to reviews

Title: How have researchers defined and used the concept of “continuity of care” for chronic conditions in the context of resource-constrained settings? A scoping review of existing literature and a proposed conceptual framework

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Author’s response to reviews:

First of all, I would like to thank the reviewers for their time and comments. They have been so helpful with clarifying and focusing the scope and flow of the storyline of the article.

Reviewer #1: The article makes some useful points and provides an argument for much clearer wording when talking about continuity of care and its dimensions and this should be a helpful contribution to the field and especially should draw attention to those stepping into this arena in LMIC a useful introduction.

Reviewer #2: This is a well-written manuscript on a topic that is very interesting not only from the perspective of care for chronic conditions but also towards strengthening health systems. However, I have a major concern.

Reviewers & Reviewers’ Comments Authors’ Responses

1 The authors might want to explore a paper published since they submitted their manuscript that seems highly relevant to their arguments and also refers to a well-known conceptualisation of chronic care (CCM) that does not seem to be referred to in their piece:

https://gh.bmj.com/content/3/6/e001077.info
Thanks for pointing out this important and relevant article. We have incorporated the findings from this article in our introduction.

We have cut the mention to the CCM for word count. However, given your comments, we decided to expand the introduction as it is important to clarify the important concepts and also to build a rationale for the choices we made in this review.

1 Throughout the manuscript there are a number of small grammatical, mis-sense or typographical errors that I am afraid I did not have time to highlight individually. Please can the authors check the manuscript carefully.

We asked for the help of a native-speaker to edit the article.

2 The objective of the study is to clarify the concept of and describe the state of knowledge regarding the definition and use of the concept of CoC for chronic conditions in primary healthcare.

It is therefore hard to grasp how the proponents have reached the themes they gave in their results, three of which mention "researching". Perhaps the proponents can explicitly describe the theory used in reviewing the selected articles? This aspect could be made clearer so that the full article can be better understood. As it is, there seems to be a major disconnect between how the results have been stratified with the full manuscript. The manner of reviewing and analysis of the selected articles could be improved so that thematic analysis is in congruence with the objectives and the discussion - which are both centred on exploring the concept and definition of continuity of care. Following the comments of the both reviewers. We have modified the article’s title, research objective and the fifth step in the analysis process to clarify the connection between the research question and the results.

3 Title - It would make more sense if the title referred to the question of how have researchers defined / characterised continuity of care.

The new title is:

How have researchers defined and used the concept of “continuity of care” for chronic conditions in the context of resource-constrained settings? A scoping review of existing literature and a proposed conceptual framework

4 Abstract: The sentence 'how the response to chronic health needs and the different elements of long-term model of care have been have been translated into the context of health systems and policy in low- and middle-income countries’ suggests to me the paper will be about the actual translation into policy and practice while the paper is about how
researchers have used CoC as a lens through which to explore various forms of health care.

The abstract was updated in light of the different comments regarding the alignment of objective and results.

5 Abstract: I think the methods should refer to the fact that a single investigator identified, selected and then analysed the literature. It should also be more clear about the purpose to identity concepts and themes and that any form of study was eligible whereas any results or inferences related to outcomes of CoC were not a subject of focus.

We have incorporated the comments to the methods section in the abstract.

6 Major issue for abstract, methods and results - The authors refer to an inductive approach to looking for themes. But are these really themes in the sense often understood in qualitative research or did the process result in the identification of different categories of research paper / topic which are then explored in more detail?

We have provided further details on the iterative process for data extraction and analysis.

Firstly, a thematic analysis was used in which extracted data regarding the context of using CoC and CoC definition were analysed inductively to identify similar patterns. Based on the identified themes, articles were divided into groups, MaxQDA was used to perform cross-case synthesis under each theme and then to compose the findings. Secondly, MaxQDA was used to re-code each article with themes focused on CoC definition and its three items of longitudinal care, patient-professional relationship, and coordinated care. Consequently, we performed a cross-case synthesis for the articles within each group to compose the findings.

7 Background.

There is no clear explanation given of why a review of LMIC literature would provide for a different conceptual understanding of CoC than a similar review of high income county literature. A review (ref 8) is alluded to that encompasses the high income literature so can the authors be more clear about what the findings of this earlier review were and what their new review adds.

We made the argument based on the different contexts and resources available. We have also expanded on these aspects in the revised manuscript.

8 Methods, line 99 - which definition of LMIC was used as a criterion in the search strategy
We have used the classification of the World Bank in addition to using general terms. We have added this clarification to the revised manuscript.

9 Methods, section 5, line 121 - not at all clear what is meant here by cross-case synthesis. Are the selected papers the 'cases'?

Yes, the selected articles are the cases. We have clarified the fifth step in the analysis process to clarify the connection between the research question and the results.

10 Results, line 126 - how did they reduce the 134 articles to 55 for review, it is not clear what the criteria were for discarding references now who made these decisions

The criteria to assess the full texts was mentioned in the methods section. We clarified the criteria in the results section as well.

11 Results, Figure 1 - This is title as showing the 3 components of CoC but the figure has multiple boxes and arrows so it is not really clear to me what the 3 components are and where they are situated / how they are identified in the figure itself.

We have updated the figure based on your comments and other comments from our colleagues.

12 Tables 2 & 3 - I am afraid I have absolutely no idea what the horizontal, variably shaded bars are supposed to mean in these tables, are these an intended feature of the tables?

We added them in search for a different visualization than the table. But forgot to take them out. Sorry for the confusion.