Reviewer’s report

Title: Governance of health research funding agencies: an integrated conceptual framework and actionable functions of governance

Version: 0 Date: 16 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Oriana Ciani

Reviewer's report:

I read with interest the manuscript "Governance of health research funding agencies: an integrated conceptual framework and actionable functions of governance" and have some suggestions to give in order to improve it. Most of them relate to restructuring the current version of the manuscript.

I would clarify since the beginning what funding agencies/organizations fall within the scope of this analysis. This should be made clear since the beginning and motivated exclusion and inclusion criteria should be listed in the methods section in order to understand who are exactly the institutions the framework we want to apply to.

The methods should include three main sections: 1) Review of existing frameworks; 2) Development of conceptual integrated framework; 3) Application of the newly developed framework to a sample of agencies. In general a more accurate description of what the authors did is warranted in this section.

Under the first section the methods for the un-systematic review of frameworks should be better described. Note that a search strategy including the term "framework" is likely to miss many useful references in this setting (e.g. what about "model" for health research governance?). This element should at least be mentioned in the limitations section which is currently missing. The list of selected framework is actually a result of this activity and should therefore be moved down. In relation to section 3) (Application of the newly developed framework to a sample of agencies) the links and connections between some of the organisations used to develop the framework (e.g. NICE) and to test it (e.g. NIHR, both in the UK) should be explored. In this last section, it should be made clear the aim is to identify pragmatic actions theoretically identified by the agencies under the dimensions (only in terms of governance) of the framework rather than to assess the same agencies on these dimensions.

The same three sections used to structure the methods should be used for the abstract and the results. In this respect, according to authors, the proposed framework develops around three axes in Figure 1 but I am not sure which axes are these by looking at the graph.

As regards the discussion, some of the points that are currently raised in the conclusion paragraph should move here and the conclusion should be used to briefly summarise the findings of the paper and key messages for readers and managers, policy-makers in the health research space.
Level of interest
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An article of limited interest

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

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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