Reviewer's report

Title: A framework of the desirable features of guideline implementation tools (GItools): Delphi survey and assessment of GItools

Version: 1 Date: 6 May 2014

Reviewer: Melissa Armstrong

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions

1. While the conclusion section in the manuscript is well-supported by the preceding sections, I wonder if the sentence in the abstract conclusion, “Inclusion of higher quality GItools with more guidelines may support implementation and use of guidelines by target users” might be over-stating the findings. Only 8.7% of the guidelines they reviewed included GItools at all. It seems that a reasonable conclusion could be that we need to increase the availability of GItools in general. Whether GItools meeting the proposed framework are better than GItools in general has yet to be established, as acknowledged by the authors on page 15 of their manuscript.

2. The authors spend time in the introduction describing current challenges to guideline implementation, including lack of funding for implementation strategies (p.5). In the discussion, however, there is no mention of cost or other barriers to implementation of the suggested framework. This is an important consideration. While some proposed tool features have no associated costs (stating objectives, naming target users, describing methods, etc), other features, particularly pilot testing and prospectively collecting user feedback, have associated costs that could be a barrier to using the suggested framework. Another potential barrier is that of publication. With word count restrictions for many journals, it is unlikely that the suggested GItool features could be included in guideline manuscripts. How to publish such information, then, is something that guideline development organizations will have to negotiate (besides the need for a tool repository as identified in the manuscript). It would be worthwhile to include a paragraph in the manuscript addressing potential barriers to use of the GItool framework.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.