Reviewer's report

Title: Organizational conditions for quality improvement based on national registry data in Sweden: a qualitative study using the consolidated framework for implementation research

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Reviewer: Laura Damschroder

Reviewer’s report:

This presents results from a qualitative content analysis using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR). The study’s objective was to expand the knowledge base related to “national registry and database use at the organizational level, and the role of politicians and public officials in improving care through the use of registries.” Specifically, they interviewed politicians and other public officials from four county councils in Sweden intending to use the Swedish Stroke Registry as a focal point.

This manuscript has several strengths. Methods are well-described including general information about registries in Sweden and associated structures, participants, data collection, and coding and analyses. It presents important findings about gaps in structures that need to be addressed for optimal use and benefit to be achieved from registries at multiple levels of a health system.

MAJOR EDITS

1. Meso, macro, directorate, and organizational levels are presented and described somewhat but then used inconsistently through results and discussion making it difficult to follow. Only individuals affiliated with county councils were interviewed for this study and so would be more informative about the directorate or meso (as defined on page 7). The stated purpose mentions “organizations” (which leads me to think of local hospital settings); the idea of “organization” is reinforced on page 5 which states that using the CFIR “…contributes to an enhanced understanding of the context influencing the work of “hospital clinics…” The authors need to clearly define terms and segments of “context” they propose to explore/study and then use that language consistently throughout the paper. A visual schematic may help to explain the various entities mentioned later in the paper and their relationships with indication of their level (e.g., meso, macro). The following bullets point out a few more examples that contribute to this general confusion. There are many more…

a. Page 7 states that implementation conditions are studied at the meso level which is defined

b. Page 7 also defines directorates and directorate level; the directorate level seems to be synonymous with the meso level
c. A brief mention is made to “macro” on page 5 without definition or mention elsewhere

d. Clarify that “staff” (used throughout Results) are referring to individuals at the local hospital settings – is this true?

e. Page 10-11 mentions “central development unit”

f. Page 12 “formally appointed units”

g. P 14 “clinical and management levels”

2. The paper purports to focus on the Stroke registry and yet it is rarely and inconsistently mentioned in results. Much mention is made of registries in general. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the *interviews* (and perhaps the larger study) focused on the Stroke Registry but directorates did not limit their responses and findings thus centered on registries (NQRs) more broadly with perhaps a bit more depth on Stroke registry in a few areas.

3. A section is needed that describes the role and function of the directorates. Membership is well defined but functions are not. Clarifying this will help the reader work through findings much more easily. For example, do the directorates engage in QI? I assumed that QI would occur in the hospital settings but e.g., page 10 says that “most respondents mention that, for QI purposes, it is crucial that output data can be attained in real-time at the directorate level…” thus, it appears the directorates engage in QI as well but how does this relate to QI done in hospitals?

4. Results are a confusing tangle of findings at the meso and micro (and other?) levels. Inner Setting, according to the authors, includes both. Table 2 could be greatly expanded to include operationalized descriptions for each construct as applied in this study – a strength of the paper is use of these constructs at multiple levels. More explication of how this was done would be valuable.

5. Related to #4, each section/construct within Results needs to be better organized to reflect findings at the meso level and then how that links into or affects micro-level settings. Be clear when describing entities within one level and then another.

6. Tension for change: does not seem to be applicable because the NQRs already exist. Perhaps there is Tension for *needed* change or improvements to NQRs which are underutilized.

7. The construct for Incentives and Rewards was combined with Goals and Feedback (G&F). Goals and Feedback describes a "process" where "goals are clearly communicated, acted upon, and fed back to staff and alignment of that feedback with goals." These two constructs should be separated. The findings about compensation being tied to performance is in the sphere of Incentives and Rewards – or depending on how this construct is conceptualized between meso versus micro levels, this may relate to External Policies and Incentives that is
within the Outer Setting Domain. Perhaps the economic incentives motivate organizations (micro? Meso?) to clearly define those as goals for their organization with clear communications to staff who then use feedback to monitor their progress/contributions toward achieving those goals but this is not covered.

8. In the Discussion, include a section that reflects back on the usefulness of the CFIR with recommendations for improvement; especially related to operationalizing across multiple levels.

9. Discussion is too long and needs to be considerably tightened. Focus on findings and recommendations and then tie to published literature as appropriate.

MINOR EDITS

1. There is reference (#9) to a paper that is “forthcoming.” This will need to be taken out of the citations assuming it is not published.

2. Relative Advantage: (p 11) starts off saying NQR has high relative advantage but ends by saying really, people preferred the Regional Comparisons. This is a theme (the preference of Regional Comparisons) that manifests throughout and a major finding. This paragraph is inconsistent, however. It seems that perhaps people’s *idea* of the *potential* of the NQR has high relative advantage but in reality, the Regional Comparisons have higher Relative Advantage.

3. Page 9: States that there is an option to work only with selected constructs from the CFIR which cites the original published paper from 2009. This is explicitly recommended in our more recent paper: Damschroder, L. J., & Lowery, J. C. (2013). Evaluation of a large-scale weight management program using the consolidated framework for implementation research (CFIR). Implementation Science, 8(1), 51.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance 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