Reviewer’s report

Title: Specification of Implementation Interventions to Address the Cascade of HIV Care and Treatment in Resource Limited Settings: a Systematic Review

Version: 1  Date: 21 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Cheryl Hunter

Reviewer’s report:

This is an improved version of the paper, and it reads well. Most comments are just for clarity.

Abstract

- Remove reference to PCA

- Where it reads "sought to assess... globally", you might want to change "globally" for in low to middle income countries

Background

- Remove "to identify strategies" after "conceptualisation and reporting of implementation research" or clarify what you mean by "strategies"

- Where you define implementation interventions as "improve use of ART in HIV-infected individuals" - is this not a bit too narrow to encompass what you then review? Would a more suitable definition recognise that you are not just looking at interventions that improve use in individuals, but as you say elsewhere that improve the uptake of HIV care and treatment at any point in the cascade?

Methods

- In your search strategy, should you specify "implementation interventions" were the target rather than just "interventions"?

- The idea of "semi-coded and coded form" is still not clear. I understand that you coded to Proctor domains and to your own intervention types and approaches, as you defined them. But what does the "semi-coded" part refer to? Is it clearer to state that somethings were coded to specific definitions, and others were extracted without any coding (e.g. author or country information)?
- "In turn, these behavioral targets are in general necessary but usually insufficient component causes of a cascade step." - is "causes" the right word here? The sentence is not currently clear. I think what you mean is that these behavioural targets may be necessary to achieve the aims of that particular cascade step (e.g. retain people on treatment) but are not usually sufficient on their own to achieve the aim.

- Why do you say you "err towards inclusion" when things are not clear? Isn't it more typical to err towards exclusion"? Can you justify your choice, and what you mean by "erring towards inclusion" (do you mean in terms of including in the review or recording presence of a component rather than absence?)

Results

- in the sentence "in linear regression of reporting completeness..." I think it's clearer to say "by cascade step" rather than "on cascade step"

Discussion

- It looks like you didn't change "substantially below 100%" as requested by reviewer 3

- Where you write "a study in Kenya found", could you change it to "a study in Kenya, which found"

- You use the word "positioning" a couple of times and it feels like "enabling" of "informing" might be better, e.g. "thus positioning scale up of this service" could be "thus informing scale up of this service" and "Mechanistic clarity positions results from one particular setting to inform expected results in a different" reads more clearly as "Clarity in terms of mechanisms enables results from one particular setting to inform expected results in a different setting"

- The term "meta-scientific" is unnecessary and not clear

- should this read "through" not "though" - "we extend the current meta-scientific discourse on reporting though empiric quantification of the reporting gap in a specific topical area"

- you use the word "permits" but again "enables" would work better - "Specification also enables researchers to evaluate the intervention in a new setting and implementers to scale up the intervention (perhaps with adaptations)"

Tables

- In the table defining the Proctor domains, the example given for "dose" and "temporality" is the same and actually the definition doesn't capture temporality well
- Table 1 has a small error in it - the word "is" is repeated in the action target example more than needed

- Table 3 has 160 studies included, despite your repeated assertion of 157. Please clarify

- Also, check the categories for table 3 all add up to the correct number of studies - you have accounted for the fact that a study might be done in more than one region, but it is less clear why there are only 156 studies with a positive or negative effect - is this because there was a study with no effect too?

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