Author’s response to reviews

Title: Advancing the literature on designing Audit and Feedback Interventions: Identifying theory-informed hypotheses

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Author’s response to reviews:

Response to editor and reviewer comments

We are pleased to re-submit our manuscript to Implementation Science. The authors would like to thank the two reviewers as well as the editor for their attention to our manuscript, to the speed at which the reviews were completed, and the resulting helpful revision suggestions. We also thank you for the comments about the quality and worthwhile nature of this work. We have addressed each one of the suggestions requested. Below you will find a summarized and numbered list of each issue followed by our response.

Editor comments:

1. In some places "feedback" is used while in most you refer to A&F. Is there a difference?

Response: From our perspective, there is no difference between these terms. We have altered the paper to use the term A&F throughout. Note that we have also ensured this consistency in the tables and appendices.
2. I wondered whether a case study might help illuminate the methodology. You have done a very good job of explaining a complex process but it is quite dense. Not mandatory, just a suggestion to consider.

Response: While this is an interesting idea, we have chosen not to create a case due to concerns about making the paper even more dense.

3. The section on member checking is not clear enough and I note reviewer 2 felt the same. Is this team consensus?

Response: We have made some adjustments (in the section on Member Checking on page 10) to be clear that the member checking was a process of checking with the study participants (ie the experts) to ensure that we interpreted their interviews correctly.

4. The section on describing the sample feels out of place at the end of the methods section so you may consider moving this up.

Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We have moved this section to more logically follow the section on participants.

5. The first paragraph of the discussion was slightly repetitive so please consider further synthesis here.

Response: We agree and have made some edits to reduce the repetition.

6. You identify a strong focus on psychology (n=9). What impact may this have had?

Response: The focus of our experts on psychology might matter less than one would think. A&F inherently targets individual psychology; it would almost be odd if a theory expert didn't have some psychology background. That said, having a strong focus on experts who primarily identified with the field of psychology could have produced more strategies focused on individual behaviour change as opposed to organizations, systems or policies. It is difficult to know based on our methodology and how we categorized the primary identified fields of our participants. We have chosen not to include information about this in the paper rather than attempt to explain an issue we are not entirely certain about or can adequately cover.
7. A stronger sense of "what next" is needed’

Response: Thank you for this helpful suggestion. Our specific next steps involve conducting a prioritization exercise of all of the hypotheses to provide some specific direction for testing A&F interventions head to head. We have already described this but changed the wording to make it clear that this is the next step. We have added this detail on page 17, first paragraph.

Reviewer #1:

1. One issue to consider would be to acknowledge the North American/European bias of participants and therefore how A & F may be considered among those from Asian and Pacific cultures.

Response: Thank you for this useful comment. We have added this on page 20 with the other limitations.

Reviewer #2:

1. More detail related to the participants is needed to understand the criteria for inclusion. For example, can we assume they being published in their area of expertise was required and what does it mean to have "experience in feedback”? What type of experience was required to meet eligibility criteria?

Response: We have re-worded this section (first paragraph under ‘participants’, page 7) to better describe our criteria. We didn’t include people based on their experience related to the use of feedback. Rather, our focus was on their expertise in the use of theory relevant to A&F as evidenced by published work. We wanted them to apply theory and their disciplinary perspectives to A&F.

2. Does this work apply only to primary care settings or do the authors believe it be generalizable to other delivery settings/systems?

Response: This work is not specific to primary care and could be applied to any healthcare delivery setting or system.
3. The use of the term "member checking" was a little confusing. Wasn't this simply a component of the analysis?

Response: See response to editor re same issue.

4. The discussion and/or conclusion do suggest some next steps but more specificity would add to the paper's value (suggested research priorities).

Response: See response to editor re same issue.