Reviewer’s report

Title: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS IN HEALTHCARE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Version: 0 Date: 16 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Duncan Chambers

Reviewer's report:

This systematic review of 'research implementation strategies' appears to be more broadly based than previous reviews of the field cited here. The overall findings and recommendations for further research add little to what is already known (very few randomised trials, need to evaluate effects on actual outcomes etc.). The main output of the review is the conceptual model of factors perceived to be associated with effective research implementation strategies.

Specific comments

1. The narrative synthesis uses Kirkpatrick's evaluation model hierarchy as a framework but the results presented are basically a brief description of each included study. This section of the results should have some summary text, even if it is just to say that the studies were too few and diverse for meaningful conclusions.

2. I would consider deleting the first two sentences of para 2 of the background section. This is because they hold the reader up by making such a sweeping statement and you then go on to acknowledge factors which may limit the use of evidence. The paragraph would flow better if you just started with 'Evidence-based decision-making...'

3. The distinction between the way experimental and non-experimental studies were treated in the synthesis should be explained in the methods section. Was this approach specified in advance in the protocol?

4. The thematic synthesis presents a paradox in that data about factors associated with effective implementation strategies are derived from study designs considered too weak to be included in the narrative synthesis of effectiveness. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that these are factors perceived to be associated with effective strategies?

5. Following on from the previous comment, you have assessed study quality with a tool that I have not seen before but which appears to be designed primarily for quantitative research. Given that you then apply a qualitative synthesis method to most of this evidence, I was left uncertain as to the reliability of the statements being made in the thematic synthesis section. I
would be interested to see the results of a qualitative study quality assessment or possibly an assessment of the overall body of evidence (CERQUAL).

6. At various points in the Results, there are sentences that left me confused about which and how many studies are being referred to. For example (p13): 'Regular contact in the form of reminders encouraged actions, conversely the study by Dagenais et al...' Please check the thematic synthesis results section in particular as I found this hard to follow in places.

7. First paragraph of the Discussion should include references. The middle section of this paragraph (lines 41-45) doesn't relate very clearly to what comes before and after.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of limited interest

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

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal