Reviewer’s report

Title: Navigating the Sustainability Landscape: A Systematic Review of Sustainability Approaches in Healthcare

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Reviewer: Ross Bailie

Reviewer's report:

Thanks for the opportunity to review this paper. It addresses an important and somewhat fraught topic.

The paper provides a review and synthesis of published descriptions of 'methods' that have been used to assess sustainability in healthcare, and the perspectives, applications and constructs used in these 'methods'. A major limitation of the review, that is only briefly addressed in the paragraph on the limitations of the review in the Discussion section of the paper, is that the review does not include any assessment of the quality of evidence or the soundness of theory behind the described methods, constructs, etc. The approach of categorising and counting different 'perspectives' seems overly simplistic. Similarly, the reference in the review to the findings as 'evidence' is questionable. The claim in the paper that the framework presented in Table 3 represents a 'consolidated' framework seems to be an over-statement of the findings of the review.

The reason why I say above that the topic of sustainability is somewhat fraught is that it seems increasingly clear that there is little in healthcare that should be sustained, beyond a culture of learning and improvement. We are in a world of constant evolution and change, and one where everything about us can and should be improved. This may be one reason behind the difficulty of finding a suitable definition for 'sustainability in healthcare'. The authors refer to this difficulty of definition in the first paragraph of page 5, and to a 'working definition' which includes ... (page 5, lines 8-10). But they do not provide an actual working definition for the review. On page 10 they discuss the definitions that are used in the papers included in the review, but there is no critical analysis of these definitions. Dictionary definitions of sustainability are informative in describing how the term can be used as either a process or as a noun, and this could provide a useful basis for assessing how the term is used in the scientific healthcare literature. The question about what should really be sustained is left hanging ...

The discussion of limitations should provide a more critical assessment of the methods of the review, and what can be learned from the review.

The claim in the conclusion that this review 'provides a valuable resource to researchers, healthcare professionals, and improvement practitioners ...' is questionable. There is no clear case
made for why or how this review represents a significant advance in the understanding of sustainability.

Other specific comments:

- The title of Table 1 would more appropriately refer to the list of papers included in the review, rather than the list of methods.

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