Author’s response to reviews

Title: Comparison of Rapid vs In-Depth Qualitative Analytic Methods from a Process Evaluation of Academic Detailing in the Veterans Health Administration

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Reviewer #1

Abstract

1) 28 - not clear what is meant by providers (also page 5 line 6/7)

RESPONSE: We added “primary care” in front of “providers” in the Abstract. We also added “academic detailers (clinical pharmacists)” to assist with clarity and maintain consistency with the text of the manuscript. Furthermore, we detailed the categories of providers interviewed on page 6 for further clarity.

Methods

2) Page 6, lines 4-11: describes using CFIR for both RA and in-depth but the background section implies that CFIR is just associated with the in depth analysis (page 5 16-36)

RESPONSE: We agree that the phrasing present on page 5 was misleading. We have changed the wording to reflect the fact that both the RA and in-depth analysis used the CFIR.
3) Page 6, line 53: I find the use of the term 'rich descriptions' to be very problematic as its meaning is vague. I much prefer 'detailed' or 'in-depth'. However, I appreciate that it's a commonly used term in qualitative research so feel free to ignore this comment.

RESPONSE: We appreciate this encouragement to use more rigorous, scientific language. “Rich” on page 7 was changed to “detailed”.

4) Page 9, lines 38-44: the dissemination strategy culminates in a report to the funders, was this analysis submitted for peer review publication (what's the paper referenced as 13 based on?)

RESPONSE: The findings presented to the operations partner relied on rapid analysis, but the findings in the published manuscript relied on the more in-depth, deductive analysis. We have added a sentence on page 11 to indicate this.

Results

5) Page 11, line 38: relates to the point above, need to be clear about what analysis reference 13 was based on (I could probably look this up but I think that it should be explicit here)

RESPONSE: Again, thank you for pointing out the reference was not clear. We have deleted the first sentence in the ‘Parent Process Evaluation’ and added a sentence at the end of the paragraph that refers the reader to another publication for more details (page 12).

6) Page 11, line 48. 'Transcripts from these interviews …' do you mean the provider interviews where you've given a breakdown or the entire data set, I think it's the latter but it's not clear

RESPONSE: That line has been edited for clarity.

7) Page 12, line 4: I feel a bit uncomfortable with the term 'reliability' which is used in a different way in quantitative and survey research, the use here feels a bit different and relies on findings being 'similar'. I wonder whether a different term might be considered but the matching of concepts and findings seems robust and so just offer the comment as food for thought. I notice that in the discussion you have used the term consistent which is a better fit here.

RESPONSE: To reduce reader confusion regarding what is meant by the term ‘reliability’ and whether we may be referring to a quantitative measure, we have changed it to ‘consistency’.
throughout. We do want to note that citation 14 does refer to reliability as consistency, which was part of the reasoning behind our use of that term.

We also noticed that we could remove the third definition of consistency (reliability) in the Discussion section (page 15).

8) Page 13, lines 16-43: I think the comparison needs to include more details other than the overall time taken, it’s more about the researcher time involved which includes the number of researchers involved. We can probably get this to a degree from reading the methods but I think it would present a more complete picture if such details were included in figure 3 otherwise the comparison lacks value.

RESPONSE: As the reviewer notes, the comparison depends on researcher time involved, which is why we have not altered the figure entitled “Timeline for conducting rapid and in-depth analysis” (Figure 3). Given the amount of time varied for each analyst involved in coding and was not tracked, we are not able to add this information to the figure. In each section describing the RA and in-depth analysis, we have provided details on project personnel involved with the coding process for each method, as well as their coding responsibilities. We also added more information about the addition of a new coder for the in-depth analysis (see point 10 below). Finally, in the Discussion section, we previously mentioned a limitation related to not tracking hours of each analyst (page 17).

Discussion

9) Pages 13-14, first para of discussion: the authors highlight that the RA was sufficient for the funders but is that the limit of what can be done with the analysis can it be published in peer review journals where it can have a wider impact (this is why I have raised the issue of reference 13 above), if for publication purposes it needs more in-depth work then this presents something of a dilemma for research teams.

RESPONSE: The reviewer raises an important point. We believe we could have published the rapid analysis findings, as the methods were sufficiently rigorous. The first author of the findings paper had made the decision to describe the more in-depth analysis since our team prepared it after the completion of the in-depth analysis. Moreover, this paper should help in reassuring subsequent reviewers that the rapid analysis is sufficient for some qualitative study designs. We do also address this concern in the Discussion, noting the similarities between the results from the RA and the in-depth analysis (page 15).
10) Page 14, the discussion about the role of the CFIR is important as it was used on both analyses and as you point out, it's not entirely surprising that it generated similar results. However, a bigger problem which doesn't seem to be represented as a weakness is that the same research team carried out both analyses. I don't understand how the second analyses could not be influenced by the first. Unless I'm missing something obvious this seems to be a fundamental issue with the paper that the authors need to engage with both in terms of the consistency of findings but also in the resource implications.

RESPONSE: We appreciate that we did not sufficiently highlight that a new team member was added to the coding analytic team for the in-depth analysis. We now highlight this on page 10. This individual was not privy to the findings of the RA and was paired with another coder. We also added the fact that the in-depth analysis began approximately 6 months after the RA, which may have an impact on memory for original coders, and the coders did not review the RA findings prior to starting the in-depth coding (page 10).

11) Page 15, lines 24–26: interesting that the authors note that the 'RA is insufficient for making or affirming prevalent constructs and outcomes'. However, I'm not really clear on why this is as the findings from the RA are consistent with the in-depth analysis and as such more details on the nature of the trade off would be helpful.

RESPONSE: We made revisions to this section to further detail possible challenges with completing the full rating process when doing RA (page 16).

Reviewer #2

1) The RA approach is compared to an "in-depth analysis". The analytical approach "in-depth analysis" could be clarified and anchored in the qualitative research field. What is the definition of "in-depth-analysis", what type of qualitative approach is it? References to this method? Now the "in-depth analysis" is presented as a kind of generic qualitative analysis. To be able evaluate the advantages/disadvantages of the RA-approach it is important to understand against exactly what qualitative method it has been compared to. As it is described in the method section, it seems to me as a directed content analysis (e.g. Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

RESPONSE: We have added a sentence noting that the in-depth analysis is in line with content analysis using a directed approach (page 6), which should clarify the comparison between RA and in-depth qualitative analysis. Hsieh and Shannon, 2005 are also cited and added as a
reference. We appreciate this suggestion and believe it will provide readers with an improved understanding of our analytic approach.

2) I would suggest that the authors would develop their methodological concepts to assess trustworthiness and reliability of the method - beyond consistency in findings. See for example Graneheim & Lundman, 2003 and the concepts of creditability and transferability, which I find of particular relevance for this study. This would have implications for all parts of the manuscript. It is not surprising that the findings are consistent as the CFIR framework has been used in deductively in both the compared approaches.

RESPONSE: The reviewer raises an important point about qualitative research design and methods, and the Graneheim and Lundman, 2004 article is an excellent resource for how to best conduct as well as describe the methods of qualitative studies in manuscripts. This paper is focused on comparing and contrasting two specific qualitative analytic approaches added to the Conclusions section (page 19-20) to remind the reader that this manuscript focuses primarily on qualitative analysis, and other factors need to be considered when conducting qualitative evaluations.

3) The argumentation for using REM and rapid-cycle evaluation approaches should also mention their known limitations (e.g. Ash et al, 2008; McNall et al, 2007) in the background section (p.4).

RESPONSE: Thank you for the excellent citation suggestions. We incorporated the main limitations and challenges associated with rapid analysis noted by each of these manuscripts in the Background section (page 4). We would also like to note that in our Discussion section (page 16), we do acknowledge that rapid analyses may have limited applicability in confirming associations between identified constructs and outcomes, which are alluded to as limitations in the above citations.

4) The case provided in the study - a successfully implemented AD-program to motivate provider change when new drugs coming to market - is at rather straightforward "implementation object". It would be interesting if the authors elaborated on how the characteristics of this successful case may have influenced the results. In other words, is the RA-analysis also suitable for interventions/projects that are more complex?

RESPONSE: We realized that the description of AD was very limited and oversimplified the nature of the intervention. AD focuses on changing prescribing provider behavior to be safer and
more effective. We have rephrased the description of AD on page 5 to better reflect its depth and complexity.

5) Full description of methods of data collection and analysis, establishing trustworthiness is referred to an unpublished publication (page 5, line 50). Consequently, these aspects cannot be assessed. I suggest that "analysis" can be omitted from this referral, as a detailed description of the analysis actually is presented in this manuscript.

RESPONSE: We have deleted the word analysis (page 6).

6) Some readers might be confused by the relative extensive method section (6 pages), and the rather slim result section (about 2 pages). Still, this is what we often see in method-papers. The authors might consider some re-dispositions to make the different sections of the manuscript more balanced.

RESPONSE: We agree that this paper is unusual in the weight given to Methods versus Results. However, the purpose of this paper is to compare two types of analytic methods, each of which must be sufficiently described, which appropriately lengthens the Methods section.