Reviewer's report

Title: Implementation effectiveness of health interventions for Indigenous communities: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Kathleen Conte

Reviewer's report:

I found this paper much improved. Particularly the reporting of the results and conclusions. I think it's perfectly appropriate to apply a theoretically-based framework post-hoc as the authors have done. I think that the purpose of the paper, therefore, is to examine the extent to which these key principles for implementation in Indigenous communities are reported/reflected in existing studies. By doing so, the authors are providing 'baseline' insights into how key principles are currently implemented in interventions in Indigenous communities. This is an area that is severely understudied, yet crucial given the expanding health inequities faced by Indigenous peoples. The information provided in this article is useful to strengthening reporting and implementation.

Although the authors clearly state their purpose on page 6 lines 52-58, there are a few places in the text where the language contradicts or confuses this. Therefore, clarifying a few points and streamlining the language is my main recommendation. I'll point out a few confusing points below in my response, with a few other minor points to consider.

1. Abstract. Background section. I think the HPW is a framework that provides/recommends a foundation for implementation in Indigenous communities - as it's not an intervention, I don't think 'demonstrates' is the right word.

   o Methods. Explain here that you used qualitative synthesis (or thick description as stated in your response to the reviewer). Also, I think you mean data were 'extracted' from studies, not 'collected'

   o Conclusions: Suggest rewriting this. The current conclusion focuses too much on health outcomes and effectiveness, both of which played a relatively minor role in your reporting of the study findings. Rather, observations about lack of reporting on ST and IKM are more poignant.
2. Check consistent capitalisation of 'Indigenous' (ie, line 43 pg 4)

3. Page 5 line 6 - I think the He Pikinga Waiora framework provides principles, or as supported by in line 16 'practices', but not processes for implementation.

4. Page 6, line 39-43. This paper doesn't really focus on barriers/implementers at all. I think your question reported on page 6, lines 52-58 more accurately represents what you are aiming to do here. The sentence on line 39 may be more accurately restated as: "Systematically reviewing the literature will provide insights regarding how the previously described principles (or, HPW principles) are currently being implemented and reported in Indigenous community-based health interventions. This study applies the HPW framework …"

5. Page 7 line 10-16. This explanation is confusing - especially since you are not using the HPW framework in the same way in this paper. As it currently reads it sounds like the HPW framework was associated with health outcomes. I think you mean to say that the "HPW framework, previously applied in a post-hoc manner, provided insights demonstrating associations between the implementation of framework principles and health outcomes.

6. Page 9, Data Synthesis. Since you are applying HPW post-hoc, would be helpful to include a sentence explaining whether you coding content based on the authors self-reproting these concepts reported, or whether you are using your coding scheme to recognise concepts that may or may not be identified/labelled as such by the authors. This is particularly relevant in the case of systems thinking.

7. Page 13- I'm confused by the "feedback loops" reported here. Was this something that was self-reported in these studies or part of your coding scheme?

8. Very important points made on page 15 line 6-12 about the use CHWs is not necessarily sufficient to ensuring community engagement (no action needed)
9. Line 21 - Statement beginning 'more studies included systems perspectives…' is confusing. Relates back to my point 6 above - to what extent were you unable to recognise that ST principles were evident in the study (based on your coding scheme), vs did very few studies explicitly report these ST principles?

10. Re Systems thinking - may be worth noting that although systems thinking is frequently used concept, it is relatively new and lacks clear guidelines for implementation in practice and reporting in the literature. Some helpful citations include: Carey G, Malbon E, Carey N, Joyce A, Crammond B, Carey A. Systems science and systems thinking for public health: a systematic review of the field. BMJ Open. 2015;5(12):e009002.


11. Another limitation is that studies may have included these elements but not reported on them (again, links to my point 6 above). This is particularly the case for ST which is relatively new in practice and lacks consistency/guidelines for reporting.

I suggest that HPW provides a useful framework to guide what kind of information needs to be reported about Indigenous community-based health programs to enable knowledge consolidation about these topics, and advance thinking about how best to apply these principles for improved implementation and maximum impact.

12. Conclusions. I encourage you to use active voice where you can. The passive language is causing a few confusing statements, like the opening sentence - Are you saying the HPW framework recommends/posits that these things are needed? Also, the sentence that reads 'Indigenous communities will support what they help to create' - what is the what? Programs? Interventions?
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