Reviewer's report

Title: Assessing Fidelity to Evidence-Based Quality Improvement as an Implementation Strategy for Patient-Centered Medical Home Transformation in the Veterans Health Administration

Version: 0 Date: 03 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Leopoldo Cabassa

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The objectives of this study were to describe 3 core EBQI-PCMH elements, assess variations in fidelity to these elements among sites participating in this EBQI initiative within the VA, explore the relationship between EBQI-PCMH fidelity and implementation and spread of locally develop and initiative QI projects, and describe the lesson learned from key stakeholders' perspectives about using EBQI-PCMH. This study addresses a critical gap in implementation science and advances the field's understanding on how to assess and examine the fidelity of complex, multifaceted implementation strategies.

The description of the three core elements of an EBQI strategy is under developed. It just lists the three elements without providing a better rationale for why these three elements are considered core to the EBQI strategy. (Are these central to the EBQI process? Are these linked to particular theories of organizational change models of EBQI?) These elements seem critical but some discussion of what makes the three elements core to EBQI seems warranted given the focus of this study.

The fidelity assessment criteria presented in Table 1 for the leadership and frontline priority-setting process for focusing QI efforts excludes a score of 7 from the low, medium and high categories.

The criteria used to categorize the EBQI-PACT Outcome measure for implementation and spread of locally developed and initiatated QI projects into three categories (none, Medium or high) ignores a score of one this measures. Moreover, the description of this outcome measure is not clearly presented in the manuscript. It is not clear how this outcome measure captures implementation and spread. More details are needed to describe the concepts being included and measured with this outcome indicator.
No quality assurance procedures or methodologies were described to ensure that the data abstracted from the administrative records were correctly abstracted and categorized. This seems critical given that the bulk of the data used for this study came from the abstraction of administrative records. Without this information, it is difficult to evaluate the validity of these data and these EBQI indicators.

Strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative analysis are not discussed in the analytical section of the manuscript. These strategies are critical to evaluate the rigor and quality of these qualitative analyses.

This manuscript has too many tables, which are hard to read and are not well integrated with the text presented in the result section. Any way to streamline the tables and integrate the qualitative data into the text will be helpful.

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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

- An article of importance in its field

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

- Acceptable

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