Reviewer’s report

Title: Strategies for incorporating patient-reported outcomes in the care of people with chronic kidney disease (PRO kidney): Protocol for a realist synthesis

Version: 0 Date: 16 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Samuel Silver

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this protocol for a realist synthesis on strategies to incorporate PROs into the care of patients with CKD. This is an important topic for which practical guidance is needed. My questions/comments surround making the realist methodology more approachable to a general medicine/nephrology audience.

1. I found it very hard to keep track of all the different objectives and the different methodologies for each. Could these explanations be simplified and the text reduced? Perhaps collapse a lot of the text into a summary table at the start/end of the manuscript.

2. The inclusion/exclusion criteria in Tables 2 and 4 are confusing, particularly the "must include," "and," "or" approach. These criteria should be simplified so it is easy to determine the patient population for each objective. Along these lines, the titles of the Tables should describe the objective (instead of just the objective number)

3. The PICO characteristics should be more explicit. What is the target population? Exactly how are PROs defined for this study? What type of articles are relevant (primary literature, narrative reviews, etc.)? What outcomes must be included/are relevant?

4. Figure 1 is very confusing. It seems like the methodology involves the research team searching for literature as described in the manuscript and then using realist synthesis to develop a theory. How is the theory developed? Who develops the theory? Just the research team? What about patients, healthcare staff, and other stakeholders? How will the team know that their theory is correct/useful (ie. validation)? Since this is a protocol manuscript, I think more rigor/standardization is needed here to ensure the theory and KT materials represent nephrology perspectives on PROs and not only the perspectives of the research team. For example, how will the research team ensure the available evidence and their synthesis of what will mostly be qualitative evidence is free from bias (which I expect will both be in favor of PROs?)
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