Reviewer’s report

Title: Systematic mapping of checklists for assessing transferability

Version: 0 Date: 25 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Melanie Barwick

Reviewer's report:

1) The two aims of the TRANSFER Framework are intended to support review authors (and, I would argue, checklist users are the ultimate audience as the reason review authors would use them would be to ensure the applicability at the knowledge user end - one group doesn't exist without the other) in developing systematic reviews that are more useful for decision- and policy makers by providing guidance for review authors on how to: 1 (a) Define the review question, (b) identify factors which may influence the transferability of review findings, and (c) define the review context according to those factors; and 2. Assess the transferability of review findings to the review context. While these are worthy aims, the thesis, that there is a clear need for more guidance for review authors on how to assess transferability of review findings, may not be the only issue. It is well documented that decision and policy makers are not accessing the empirical literature to the extent researchers would like to think they are; that the peer reviewed paper is not the preferred mechanism for knowledge transfer to these two audiences, and that other modalities would be more effective for building awareness of new evidence (i.e., infographics, plain language summaries, dialogue, policy briefs). Moreover, decision to adopt evidence for decision-making and related behaviour changes do not result from academic papers (see implementation science literature on process models, effectively reviewed by Per Nilsen, Implement Sci. 2015; 10: 53). Relatedly, academic papers do not typically highlight the practical application of research findings, presuming that they are writing for the academic community. While there may not be consensus on how to engage policy and decision makers, there are proposed strategies in the literature.

2) Even reviews with high external validity don't specify how the evidence is to be used or implemented. This paper misses this subtlety. The manuscript describes what tools/checklists are in the literature, and how they are similar or dissimilar, and whether they are indeed focused on the same definition of transferability. While scholarly in its aim, the paper doesn't do much to take us to the practical implications of this work. Was any information included on how these checklists were to be used? What process is suggested to use the checklists, and what are the potential actions to be taken at the culmination of the checklist? In other words, how do the checklists inform a decision maker or end user? How do the checklists integrate with what we know about implementation process; where would you use them in the process / decision to adopt?
3) Also important, how effective are these checklists in supporting decision-making? Because these checklists are intended to be themselves implemented and adopted by decision makers, it is critical that there be evidence of their utility/effectiveness. In addition to cataloguing the concepts and sectors, it would be useful to include information on whether the checklists have been evaluated.

4) The paper should include a list of the included checklists in an additional file, so that the reader can reference them.

5) Please review for typos, errant words, e.g., "to on" on page 2 line 41

If the authors can expand their paper to address the issues noted above, the work could be potentially quite informative both for researchers conducting systematic reviews, and for checklist users in the practice world.

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