Reviewer's report

Title: Patient and public involvement in data collection for health services research: a descriptive study.

Version: 3
Date: 2 March 2015

Reviewer: Andy Gibson

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper in an area where there has been relatively little published. The authors describe how the idea to involve lay people in the collection of data originated with a member of their patient and clinical engagement group. The paper describes well some of the barriers to involving lay people in data collection that they encountered, for example gaining the appropriate ethical approval and DBS checks. It is also good that they are able to concretely describe the differences that involving lay people made to their work and its benefits.

However, in general I think the paper is too descriptive and is not grounded sufficiently in the existing literature. The following are major compulsory revisions.

The authors discuss the issue of the 'representativeness' of the people they involved. This a much debated topic within involvement but the authors do not refer to the literature on this (see Martin 2008), discuss different types of representativeness or what might be the most appropriate form of representativeness in this study. The authors also state on page 4 that their research project had a patient and clinical engagement group. However, they do not give us any information about the group e.g. how many members it had, what experiences they brought to the group or how were they recruited. It is therefore difficult to assess the robustness of their approach. The authors decided to go outside of this group to find the lay people that helped them collect data but do not tell us why they decided to do this.

Similarly the authors mention the ‘professionalisation’ debate within involvement but do not refer to the literature on this e.g. Ives et al. 2013. This is directly linked to the issue of the training that the researchers provide to the lay data collectors. They mention that there were different views within the team on the dangers of ‘professionalisation’ that training might present but they do not describe what training they decided to provide in the end or how this was informed by their concerns about professionalisation.

Interestingly the authors suggest on page 19 that there may not be a role for lay people collecting data on interactions between health professionals. I’m not convinced by this argument and they do not really support this assertion.

Finally I think the conclusion of the paper, consisting of one sentence, is weak
and the figure they present at the end of the paper does not add anything to the paper.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests