Reviewer’s report

Title: Involving service users in the qualitative analysis of patient narratives to support healthcare quality improvement.

Version: 0 Date: 19 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Adele Horobin

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting piece of work and describes how patient and public involvement contributes to a novel experience-based co-design approach. The conclusions are thought-provoking too. I did find the article a little difficult to follow and I hope that my perspectives on the 'flow' and clarity of the article are helpful.

1. Plain English Summary

I wonder whether the summary could be improved in places, removing jargon and somewhat UK-specific colloquial speech. I hope my suggestions below are helpful:

First paragraph:

Replace 'collect and analyse data' with 'carry out the research and analyse, or make sense of, the results.' Replace 'typed-up interviews' with 'written copies of interviews'. Instead of referring to what would be useful for the NHS to know about (and would a non-UK reader necessarily know what NHS stands for?), how about framing it in terms of what would be relevant to improving patient care and what would help healthcare staff in improving care? In addition, the summary assumes that the reader knows what patient or service user involvement is.

Second paragraph:

Refers to researchers and then researcher later on. Was it one or more than one researcher who analysed the interviews? Replace 'had done their own analysis of the interviews' with 'had analysed the interviews'. 'NHS quality improvement' is jargon. What does that mean? Improve the quality of patient care?

Third paragraph:

Replace 'spotted some new things the researcher had missed' with 'found other themes'. 'Lots of documents' reads a bit bland. 'a good way forward' is colloquial.
2. Clarifying methods and results

The article is not presented under the headings of Background, Methods, Results and Discussion. This format is a specific requirement of the journal for methodology articles. Following this format will also help in more clearly describing your methods and the outcomes of the PPI. As it stands, I feel that there is a lack of detail in the methods in places and that the outcomes are buried amongst the methods description.

For example, in Workshop 1, the finding that the process of engaging with all the material took longer than planned is presented in a continuous feed with describing the workshop agenda and then discussing why this process took longer than planned. More descriptive detail about training for public partners and how these PPI opportunities were advertised (e.g. flyers and posters with which groups and organisations, community notice boards in which locations, which PPI involvement network?) might be useful. LB’s own reflections are of interest, but do disrupt the 'flow' of the whole story in developing the PPI. Moving these reflections to a separate results section would help. As it stands, it is not that easy to pick out the important learning points that the team gained from workshop 1 and used to modify their approach to workshop 2. Also, it would be interesting to learn more about how the public partners developed a grasp of the idea of a touchpoint. Would it be possible to provide an illustrative example of discussions the public partners had about a specific touchpoint?

Workshop 2 is not that easy to follow either. The change to the agenda, compared with workshop 1, is explained but I ended up spending time flicking between the two agendas and trying to compare them myself. Am I right in thinking that the key difference is in asking the group to identify what they think are the key touchpoints based on their own experiences, rather than by reading transcripts? How exactly was this done as this appears to be an important development of the methodology? What about the draft trigger film? This was done for workshop 2 but not workshop 1. Can this decision be explained in the context of learning from workshop 1?

3. Other points

I would be interested to know why the team chose 'Experiences of stroke' and 'Experiences of young people with depression'. This isn't really expanded upon.

An article by Jennings et al (BMC Psychiatry (2018) 18:213 https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-018-1794-8) was published very recently. The authors may find this of interest, particularly in comparing their own PPI with the Collaborative Data Analysis approaches that the team identified from their critical review. Could be a nice discussion point and illustrate their work in a wider context.
Subtitle - Running the workshops and learning from the process:

* P.15 Line 9: "We worked with two very different sets of narratives…” - in what way were they different?

* P.15 Line 14 to 34: This isn't described very clearly - parts of interview transcripts are described as 'segments', 'selections' and 'extracts'. I am not sure how these differ and how they were selected by the researchers. The training provided to the public partners is only very briefly described and, from the way it is written, I am not sure whether 'participants reading segments of interview transcripts…' is part of the training or is part of the co-discovery work itself.

The people involved in the workshops are variously described as 'attendees', 'participants', 'service users', 'people', 'users'. Consistency would help, as well as perhaps avoiding the term 'participants' due to potential confusion between PPI and participation.

I am not sure about the term 'co-discovery'. The authors claim it is used elsewhere in a different discipline. Also, PPI is awash with different terminology. Do we need another 'co-'? And what is being 'discovered'? I appreciate this is a personal opinion but wonder why something more descriptive like 'collaborative analysis' couldn't be used.

The first paragraph under the subtitle 'Patient and public involvement and data analysis' states that 'Qualitative data analysis may appear more intuitive and approachable than, say, quantitative analysis such as logistic regression or mathematical modelling'. This is a subjective viewpoint and wonder whether this statement should be removed.

It is interesting to read that the approach developed here is being applied to another project (Box 4). The authors emphasise the need to avoid reinforcing exclusion of minority perspectives. Do they suspect this could have been an issue with the methods they developed? Just wondered why this point was emphasised here.

**Level of interest**
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:

Needs some language corrections before being published
Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal