Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 25 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Susan Hrisos

Reviewer's report:

Better understanding of how to meaningfully involve patients and members of the public in different aspects of research and quality improvement processes is a very important and topical issue. The work reported is a valuable example of an attempt to involve patients in the development of trigger films based on modifications to an established EBCD methodology.

Though not extensive or entirely novel in many ways, there is valuable reflection and learning in this manuscript that warrants sharing with the broader community of researchers, improvers and PPI partners. In its current form however, the manuscript is much too long, provides too much unnecessary detail, and begins to lack a clear focus from about page 9 onwards. The attempt to provide transparency in the reporting is to be commended, but this could still be achieved with far fewer words and less minute detail. Some essential detail is missing - who facilitated the workshops and how for example. I was also not convinced that the lengthy explanation of EBCD and the work related to the current manuscript is entirely necessary. This background information, provided from line 1 on page 10 through to line 50 on page 12, is a particular example of where the manuscript could be shortened. I found myself disengaging from the manuscript at this point and then felt I had eventually reached 'the point' again at line 18, page 13 (the question addressed by the reported study). The quality of the written English is of a high standard, but some sections of the manuscript are very complex and not readily accessible or easy to understand, others are quite drawn out and at times repetitive. As well as room for the manuscript to be much more succinct throughout, clarity in what is being reported in this manuscript is an issue. There is a sense that the manuscript is trying to do too much. It was difficult to stay with the original aim of the activity reported, sometimes because the authors provide reflection on the workshop processes before fully describing what they did and how it was done and sometimes because it is not clear what they were actually wanting the workshop participants to do. Description of the analysis process, pages 13 from line 48 to line 12 on page 14 is very complex and difficult to follow. 'The aim' of the workshop/s is stated in several places and isn't always consistent. At line 51, page 14, it is unclear which 'process' the verbal feedback from workshop participants relates to - is this the whole day or the process of involving them in the thematic analysis or the sense-checking? Outcomes and impacts are distributed amongst description of process. Outcomes and impacts not directly related to the research question are reported (which is fine), and discussed in more (and unnecessary) detail than some
of the actually quite interesting and key reflections on the learning from the study itself about involving patients in 'the qualitative analysis of patient narratives' (as the title states). In the discussion section a completely new study is introduced and reported on.

The manuscript would greatly benefit from significant editing to provide a much clearer structure and focus, and much more succinct reporting of key elements of delivering the workshops, the learning that was gained from that, and the authors' subsequent reflections on what worked well, and what could be done differently. It remained unclear to me what the authors' rationale was for 'training' participants in 'qualitative research methods' when the aim was to get a 'lay' perspective on the transcript data and themes. Providing them with understanding of the approach to analysis is one thing but it seems the purpose of the training was to help them to engage in and apply a qualitative process to the data (rather than reflecting on the data or themes from the perspective of their lived experience)? It is also unclear if anything new was 'co-discovered' and if so, what this was. The authors mention 'nuances' and 'emphases' but do not elaborate on what these were, how they contributed conceptually or otherwise to the interpretation of the data and so on. The discussion section of the manuscript felt rather labored in places (the whole of page 25, though interesting, is superfluous to the aim of the study really), and some statements are not supported by published literature (lines 5 to 20 on page 24, lines 1 to 12 on page 25 are examples). What do 'assemble user reflections' (line 22 page 25), and 'chime sufficiently' mean? (line 32 page 25), and could you explain statements like 'this sensitizing approach would be equally enlightening in more theoretical sociological analysis' for the non-sociologist and lay reader? Line 50, page 25 - a completely new study is introduced and explained. This should either be removed or incorporated into the body of the manuscript as part of the exploratory study. Referring to this later workshop as a follow on study informed by the learning the manuscript is reporting on is fine, but the study itself should not be reported here and especially since box 4 presumably provides unpublished data/information?

Page 27 line 12. What was/is the 'valuable layer' that the 'lay' partners contributed. This has not yet been clearly articulated in the manuscript (or else it has but is lost amongst the detail). Lines 26-31, what were the 'nuances and emphases' that the authors found when comparing what the researcher and the users 'could see in the data'? Elaborating on these findings and also on the authors very interesting ideas about 'including early conversation and guidance on the expected content of the analysis' would greatly improve the value and contribution of this manuscript. What might this look like in practice? Did the users describe their role as being one of 'a map and a compass' and did they mean this just in the context of what they were asked to do in the workshops or could they generalize this to the context of any qualitative analysis of data drawn from service user experience? The discussion section spans 5 pages yet it is the last page and a half that begins to hold the reader's attention most. More elaboration on the ideas proposed in these final pages of the manuscript, and how this all sits within the published literature, would provide a much more focused and valuable summary of the work reported.
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