Reviewer’s report

Title: Recruitment of caregivers into health services research: Lessons from a user-centred design study

Version: 0 Date: 30 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Lotte Klim

Reviewer's report:

Dear Authors.

Thank you for highlighting the challenges of recruiting for research. The topic is highly relevant and it is important that also unsuccessful attempts are described and addressed. Your case study provides good examples of both challenges and solutions to inspire other researchers.

Introduction/Discussion:

In both sections engagement and references to Carman and Arnstein are mentioned. Despite the association to the challenges of recruitment 'engagement at a partnership level' is not addressed in the following sections neither from a theoretical or from a problematizing or from a descriptive perspective. As a reader I expect the topic of engagement to be described and explored in deep when it is the first part of the Introduction. However the process of recruitment is the specific focus of the paper - not engagement. In addition engagement is the first (=most important) part of the Discussion section. But the reflections on engagement are not being backed (explored) during the Method/Results section and therefore do not serve well as a topic for discussion. The following parts of the Discussion (page 10, line 25-49) are highly relevant and well documented/ backed by the experiences described.

I recommend to down size the focus on engagement by removing the section in the introduction and put a specific focus on the recruitment process which is backed by your empirical data/descriptions. The reflections on engagement and true partnerships are in line with numerous social study scholars and may be expanded further to contribute to the discussions.

Comments for Table 1, page 7, line 12. (The Table is not shown in the review manuscript):

To serve as inspiration and guide to young researchers without prior experiences I recommend to include in the Table: all challenges (planning, find partners, align roles and expectations, build
trust, plan suitable time slots and locations for your activities with the target group), actions, changes, time spent, money spent etc. to gather all steps of the process. It could serve also as a timeline or flowchart which would be a good way to capture your results and make them tangible for your audience.

Conveying case study experiences to general recommendations:

Your case study serves very well as an example of challenges and implications. It is a good and easy-to-understand description because it is very close to everyday situations. However when you design/formulate recommendations for other researchers I suggest that you aim to be as general as possible. You may reach that goal by exchanging 'recruitment through caregiver agencies' (p. 10, line 58) with a more general term or description of caregiver agencies because health services may be organised differently in other countries. One suggestion is 'organisation who is a trusted partner by the target group'. The purpose is to make it relevant and manageable in all settings and not limit the thinking to a specific unit or country, but rather to describe the function of this organisation/unit that would be a good solution. In this case an organisation who has the outreach to and is trusted by the target group.

Thanks for sharing your experiences.

Kind regards,

Lotte Klim

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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