Reviewer’s report

Title: PPI in research: a reflection from Early Stage Researchers

Version: 0 Date: 20 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Richard Grant

Reviewer's report:

I make the following comments which are intended to be helpful. I trust that they will help in promoting the paper's central message of the importance of PPI in research.

General.

The background meetings / training sessions at Liverpool and Split are an important part of developing the key message of the paper. A bit more background information about these two events, their purpose, agenda, attendees, conference outcome/resolutions/ would set a contextual scene for the discussion/conclusion.

ESR. Some more background information about the learning journey of these people would be useful. Are there commonalities/differences across different countries/learning centres?

Naming of researchers within the paper. Best if adopt a common policy. Some people are referenced with/without title, sometimes first name is given / sometimes not. It appears that women are first name surname and men title, first name, surname. Could be 'misinterpreted' as issues of inequality. Equality of gender and equality of role [Researcher/ PPI]. Unless formal protocol dictates, I would simply go for first name, second name [i.e. no title]

Background.

Some more information about 'waste in clinical research' at this stage would be helpful. More information is given later on but a bit more at this stage would aid initial understanding. May be a reference to greater detail 'follows'.

Para. 3. PPI can occur … etc… Suggest that you add, PPI being involved in 'data analysis' to the list of potential PPI input. I have worked on a project where this was 'invaluable'. [The SHARED Project.]

Para. 5 It would be worth mentioning support and training for PPI members in this section. Not to mould them into compliant PPIs, but to enable them to make the most/best of the potential to express their view and be part of the research 'team'.

Actions and Initiatives.

Para. 2. End of para. There is mention of 'conversation' … Nice terminology .. But what does it mean?
And how would it 'happen'/ be conducted?

Para. 3. I wonder if the concept of PPI as being part of a research 'team' could be introduced here. On the basis that all the 'players' have their own roles … professional researchers alongside lay members who each bring an equally valid perspective to the table. Together the 'team' produces research which is 'better' than the contributions of the individual parts.

Prioritisation of hot topics.

Differences between patients and researchers leading to waste. Need to clarify what is meant here. Is it differences in the research priorities which lead to waste or an inability to work together? I guess what is meant, but the script leaves some doubt!

Determine, Is it … James Lind Alliance, James Lind Alliance [JLA] or JLA?

Journal Club.

Clarification is needed about the 15 ESRs. Suggest something like … 'There are 15 ESRs known to be working on this topic. For this project/paper each ESR is given a 'working identifier', ESR1 thorough to ESR 15.'

Closing the gap; Challenges and Concerns

Reference to the quote from ESR 5. Need to clarify that PPI involvement is not about researchers telling the PPIs what to do, but researchers engaging with PPIs in discussing what needs to/could be done. Perhaps this clarification needs to come after the quote.

Discussion.

ESR training: Part of this needs to be training for the ESRs to develop the skills of 'active listening' to what the patients / public are saying. Sometimes it's not the actual words that people say but the thinking behind the words and what's driving the person to make a comment, which is the important bit. As it stands the text currently implies that the ESRs need to simplify / be clear in what they are saying so that the PPIs can understand. This is 'good' but on its own could be misinterpreted as 'talking down' to PPIs [!].

Conclusion.

First sentence …. The rationale for the importance of PPI as and when necessary is indisputable, …. I would argue that the section underlined is not required, as it implies that 'you' don't always want it [!] .. and that's [I assume] not what you intended to say.

Competing Interests.

No other authors … ? There must be a better/ different way of expressing what's meant here? .. or is that it? What about, * There are no other competing interests. ? * All the competing interests of the authors have been declared. ?
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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

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