Reviewer’s report

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

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Reviewer: Gary Hickey

Reviewer's report:

This paper is a reflective piece, from early stage researchers, on a PPI training event. Overall I thought the piece was well written and would be of interest to, in particular, other early stage researchers. I would though like to see the authors give some consideration to the points below. The major points are points 1 to 4.

1. The abstract highlights the importance of PPI to research integrity and ethical reasons. Yet the Background section seems to focus on 'waste in clinical research' (and without explaining what is meant by 'waste'). I'm not sure how waste relates to research integrity and ethical reasons - is 'waste' a third issue or is it something that is linked to research integrity or ethics?
2. Related to point 1 above - I'm not quite sure what the authors mean when they speak of PPI being 'important for both research integrity and ethical reasons' (abstract). When they do cover research integrity (p7-8) they don't fully explain how PPI can contribute to research integrity and they focus more on 'waste in research'. I'm not clear at all on what the authors mean by 'ethical reasons' - do they mean that 'waste' is an ethical issue?
3. The importance of PPI -I think the researchers could add in two more rationales re the importance of PPI. Firstly, that PPI can improve the quality of research. Secondly, the moral imperative - the public /patients should have a voice in research that will impact upon them. (See for example INVOLVE's Briefing notes for researchers' - available from their website)
4. Conclusion - this needs strengthening. eg what is it that you would like to see happen re education and training in PPI for early stage researchers?

5. Background para 3 - 'PPI in research has hinged on ensuring patients are equal stakeholders etc'. I'm not sure that I would agree with this. 'hinged on' is the phrase that I'm struggling with. It either needs explaining more or changing slightly eg 'much of the focus of PPI has been on ensuring patients etc' - as long as this can be backed up.
6. Background - para 4. 'There are numerous methods' and 'the most appropriate method'. I don't think 'method' is the right word here. Perhaps 'ways'? And rather than 'dependent' perhaps 'influenced' might be a better word.
7. p5 - top of the page. 'threads and principles'. I would avoid using the word 'principles' - unless you are going to identify some principles. So either 'common threads' or 'considerations'. You then go on to call these 'items' - call them threads or considerations.
8. p6 Actions and initiatives. First line. Lose 'within different health conditions.'
9. Typo - line 30 I think that should be 'our own research' rather than 'their own research'
10. "research on research team" - this needs explaining more. ANd is there PPI involved in this?
11. p12 'may no longer be representative of the typical patient.' I'm not sure there is such a thing as a 'typical' patient. Furthermore it is unreasonable to expect a single patient to be 'representative' - they are 'a' voice rather than 'the' voice - see the work of Kristina Staley. At best they can be asked what they think might be the view of other patients.

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