Author’s response to reviews

Title: A protocol for co-creating research project lay summaries with stakeholders: Guideline development for Canada’s AGE-WELL Network

Authors:

Mineko Wada (mineko_wada@sfu.ca)
Judith Sixsmith (j.sixsmith@dundee.ac.uk)
Gail Harwood (gharwood@shaw.ca)
Theodore Cosco (theodore_cosco@sfu.ca)
Mei Fang (m.l.fang@dundee.ac.uk)
Andrew Sixsmith (andrew_sixsmith@sfu.ca)

Version: 1 Date: 31 Mar 2020

Author’s response to reviews:

Response to Reviewers

RIAE-D-19-00071

A protocol for co-creating lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders: Guideline development

Thank you for the review of our manuscript. We list the feedback and responses below.

Reviewer #1:

1. “This is an important topic to discuss but it will be much improved if considered from a complete 360 degree approach. At present the party is written from a researchers perspective which is unhelpful, For instance the use of the term transdiscipline is clumsy and excludes a non-discipline lay contributor.”

We now use “collaborative team approach” to describe the concept of transdisciplinary working to make the language more accessible. Given the issue identified in the extant literature that researchers experience difficulty writing lay summaries of their projects, our project aims to develop guidelines that help researchers produce lay summaries by having them collaborate with their stakeholders.
2. “The guidelines for writing a report are excellent. However once again it should not be presumed that researchers are the only ones that can write clear, concise lay summaries. The advice on writing reviews is one that is given to most teenagers who attend school. There is no reason that a lay person in a team could be the best report writer.”

Again given that researchers experience difficulty writing lay summaries of their projects, our project targets researchers who may need help developing lay summary guidelines.

3. “A lot of the conclusions are valid for teams that just contain researchers. It is not so valid for teams that have a 'lay' component”

Given the issue identified in the literature, we target researchers, especially those with little to no experience in collaborating with lay people, in this project. However, we also worked on the assumption that researchers who involve stakeholders in their research teams are likely to understand the value of collaborating with them and therefore may not need the protocol.

Reviewer #2

1. “[H]aving produced lay summaries I know this can be tricky. Some guidelines, therefore, may be useful, however, reading the manuscript I am not sure what has actually been done. The method write about what will be done to evaluate, rather than what have been done. Is it a proposal for work or completed work?”

We wrote this paper following the requirements for a Protocol paper for BMC Research Involvement and Engagement. It accepts proposed or ongoing studies for protocol papers, and our paper presents a proposal of our project.

2. “Also, given that the guidelines are to write lay summaries, shouldn't lay people be involved in writing the policies?”

Older adults were involved not only in the process of developing the guidelines/protocol but also in writing this paper. We included the following sentence in the project context section: “We began this project by producing a protocol for co-creating a lay summary that consists of a series of steps based on feedback and reflections from an AGE-WELL researcher and older adults who attended co-creation workshops we organized and facilitated for the researcher. The protocol was therefore a collaborative effort.”

Reviewer #3

TITLE, ABSTRACT AND Plain English Summary

1. “The headline gives no clear information about the article type and that it focuses on the evaluation of guidelines for co-creating lay summaries of research with stakeholders (phase 2) as mentioned in the methods (L. 19-21)”
We changed the title to “A protocol for co-creating lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders: Guideline development.”

2. “The authors should add ‘evaluation’ to their keywords as the paper focuses on the ‘protocol of evaluating the guidelines (the second phase)’.”

We did not add “evaluation” because we focus on presenting a protocol of co-developing lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders and not evaluating it.

3. “Please point out in the abstract and article the aim/research question of your study.”

We state the primary objective of our study in the abstract: “The primary objective of our project is to develop guidelines for researchers in Canada’s AGE-WELL Network of Centres of Excellence, and ultimately various other disciplines, sectors, and institutions, to co-create lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders. To begin, we produced a protocol for co-creating a lay summary based on workshops we organized and facilitated for an AGE-WELL researcher. This paper presents the lay summary co-creation protocol that AGE-WELL researchers will be invited to use.”

4. “Furthermore, the authors should make sure that the structure of the paper reflects its aim(s).”

We have rearranged the structure of the paper according to the aim of the paper.

5. “Please describe the subject of the evaluation in detail.”

Because the paper now presents the protocol of co-creating lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders that we developed, we eliminated the evaluation.

BACKGROUND

6. “The development of the guidelines (phase 1) should be explained in the background, not in the methods as the paper focuses on the evaluation of the guidelines (L. 19-21).”

We have moved the project context (development of the guidelines) to the Background section.

METHODS

7. “The methodical approach is not transparent and confusing. The authors describe not only the process of evaluation (phase 2), but also the structure and content of the guidelines (phase 1) (‘protocol’; L. 4-38). As the paper focuses on the protocol of the evaluation (L. 19-21) the methods should only refer to this.”
We decided that the paper focuses on the presentation of the protocol of co-creating lay summaries of research projects with stakeholders. Therefore, the Methods section now presents the protocol and not the evaluation.

8. “The goals of the project are identical to the phases of the project and repeat themselves (L. 55ff.).”

We state the primary objectives of our project as follows: “the primary objective of our project is to develop lay summary co-creation guidelines for AGE-WELL researchers that will ultimately be made widely available to researchers across a variety of disciplines, sectors, and institutions. We began this project by producing a protocol for co-creating a lay summary that consists of a series of steps based on feedback and reflections from an AGE-WELL researcher and older adults who attended co-creation workshops we organized and facilitated for the researcher. … This paper aims to present the lay summary co-creation protocol that 24 AGE-WELL–funded researchers will be invited to use.”

9. “The authors should explain whom they mean by ‘eligible participants’” (L. 43).

We have identified “researchers who have funding for AGE-WELL’s Core Research Program 2020” as eligible participants.

10. “As the guidelines compromise six sections as described in the paper, the authors should consider of changing the title of figure 2 and adjusting it to the text.”

As we rearranged the content of each section to be aligned with the objective of our project, we made changes to Figure 2 and its name.

11. “The term ‘researcher participants’ is confusing and the use of different terms (e.g. ‘participants’, ‘stakeholders’, ‘researchers’) is misleading. There is need for a more explicit definition as to what is meant by ‘participants’ and ‘researcher’.”

We now use two terms consistently throughout the paper: “participant(s)” to refer to researcher(s) and “stakeholders.”

12. “The section on ‘evaluation methods’ is very short. The authors should describe in greater detail the methods of the evaluation process.”

As we focus on presenting the protocol of co-creating lay summaries of research with stakeholders in this paper, we removed the evaluation methods.

DISCUSSION

13. “The discussion contains a lot of interesting aspects, but some of those would better fit in the background.”
We have moved some discussion to the Background section.

14. “L. 42ff. ‘This paper has presented guidelines (protocol) developed based on a case study of the co-creation of a project lay summary’ is in contradiction to the focus of the paper (L. 18-21 (methods): ‘the protocol of evaluating the guidelines (the second phase)’. So the discussion does not match to the evaluation of the guideline (phase 2): It describes the results of the development of the guidelines (phase 1).”

We clarified the focus of our paper as being the presentation of a protocol of co-creating lay summaries of research with stakeholders and ensured that the content of each section aligns with the focus.

15. “For whom the guideline was developed should be mentioned earlier and not in the discussion.”

We now mention the development of the protocol in the Background section on page 6.

16. “What do the authors mean by case study (L. 45)? This is the first time this term is mentioned in the paper. Is the case study described in another paper? If so, please refer to this paper.”

We no longer use the term “case study.”

17. “A discussion of the methodological strengths and limitations is missing.”

We have added the limitations and a strength to the Discussion.

18. “The authors need to critically reflect which aspects belong to which chapter (background, methods, discussion) and to which phase (1 or 2) and rearrange the paper accordingly.”

We have clarified the focus of our paper and rearranged the sections accordingly.

We hope this satisfactorily addresses your concerns. Thank you again for reviewing this manuscript. Your consideration is much appreciated.