Reviewer’s report

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

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 16 Feb 2020

**Reviewer:** Kim Rathjen

**Reviewer's report:**

Thank you for the opportunity to review the manuscript „Guidelines for co-creating lay summaries of research with stakeholders”. This is an interesting paper as lay summaries have become increasingly important to make sure that research findings are communicated to and easily understood by the public in an accessible way.

However, the process described in this paper doesn't appear very clear to the reviewer. By now the paper is missing a clear aim and an adequate structure and would profit from some revisions, which are described in detail below. Some of my recommendations below might not fit any longer after the aim(s) and focus of the article are sharpened.

**TITLE, ABSTRACT AND PLAIN ENGLISH SUMMARY**

- 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)

- The authors should add "evaluation" to their keywords as the paper focuses on the "protocol of evaluating the guidelines (the second phase)".

- Please point out in the abstract and article the aim/research question of your study. Furthermore, the authors should make sure that the structure of the paper reflects its aim(s).

- Please describe the subject of the evaluation in detail.

**BACKGROUND**

- 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).

**METHODS**
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.

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

The authors should explain whom they mean by "eligible participants" (L. 43).

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.

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".

The section on "evaluation methods" is very short. The authors should describe in greater detail the methods of the evaluation process.

DISCUSSION

The discussion contains a lot of interesting aspects, but some of those would better fit in the background.

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).

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

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.

A discussion of the methodological strengths and limitations is missing.

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.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:
An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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