Reviewer’s report

Title: Public involvement in health research: what does ‘good’ look like in practice?

Version: 0 Date: 20 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Eleni Chambers

Reviewer’s report:

An interesting article - I enjoyed reading it, thank you.

The manuscript itself was clear and easy to read, although I found the first supplementary file on the three different groups a bit dense to read. The abstract and plain English summary are both clear.

Authors, p1 - I wanted information from the outset regarding who were patient/public members of the involvement groups and who were the University researchers - I know you state this later on p5, but I wondered if this could be made more explicit from the outset, on this first page if possible, particularly considering the nature of the article?

Plain English summary, line5 - "people outside of the University setting" - yes, but patients/public can be employed by Universities and therefore "inside". Do you mean people outside or patients/public, can you clarify please?

line27 - typo, were not was

p5, workshops - I wanted information on demographics and other relevant characteristics of those who attended the workshop and also how many people attended. And following on from this, did this influence the evidence obtained from the workshops in any way?

p5, literature review - I understand the justification to limit the review from 2013 to 2017 (due to the Shippee et al review), however I am concerned that the review was limited to academic literature obtained from databases only. I know that there is much evidence to be gained from grey literature, which often includes rich data from patients/carers/public which is sometimes lacking or not described as strongly in the academic literature. I was therefore disappointed that neither your review (nor Shippee's) included this.

Also, it is unclear whether any patient/public members were involved in any way in the review - the text states all authors revised the themes (lines15/16) but Authors contributions section on p16 states no public members were involved in the review? In any case, there is a particular irony here in that the article is all about good involvement in research and moreover states it is co-produced. The authors don't comment on these aspects at all, which is also disappointing.

p6, literature review - I would like further information on the 11 included articles - the standard included evidence table and in this case, I'd like to see whether included publications used grey literature sources at all and which values and principles were gained from which publications.

A further point on the literature review concerns the limiting of evidence to involvement in research only. In my experience, there is much to be gained from exploring involvement in other areas, notably
service provision. For example, values and principles have been provided for involvement in service provision in some areas of health when they are absent from involvement in research in that area. And moreover, such values/principles tend to be almost exactly the same but simply set in different contexts. I understand that this would be too wide a field to explore here as you are considering health in general, however, this issue may also warrant some discussion.

p6 onwards, Results - the principles/practicalities/values were clearly defined and explained - I found this section clear, interesting and useful. I noted on p7, lines9/10: "Value different kinds of knowledge recognises that public advisers have complementary expertise to researcher's technical knowledge" which reinforced my earlier comments on both lack of grey literature and lack of involvement of public advisers in the review. I was particularly interested in lines 30-32, where aspects of involvement were highlighted in the workshops but not identified in the review. I put this down to both the narrow 4 year date range used and lack of grey literature searching as I am aware of other publications which have identified these very same "missing" aspects.

p9, line 3 - typo, should be "support in similar ways"

p9, line9, typo, should be "includes"

p14, line2 onwards, Discussion - " Our experiences show that involving public advisers collectively in self-evaluation brings to light important aspects of involvement that have not been emphasised in the literature..." I'm not sure this interpretation is completely correct as it stands, as one could also argue that these important aspects of involvement could also be found when examining evidence from grey literature or from academic literature with a broader date range.

p14, line11 - reads better as "We advocate that aspiring to and striving to meet..."?

lines19-22, I didn't understand the following: "the value principles we identified correspond with research that did not fit the remit of our review. This suggests that there is saturation in the literature...". Could you explain/rewrite more clearly both sentences please.

lines25-27, I didn't understand why you selected enthusiasm and personalities in particular for further research possibilities. Were there particular reasons why these two and not other aspects?

Discussion - I would welcome a brief discussion of strengths/weaknesses of the evaluation itself. Also, would like to see a discussion of the influences of both the workshop attendees demographics etc and literature methodology issues I raise.

Conclusion - It would be interesting to hear more about how the challenges have been addressed since the evaluation - constructive conversations have been started but what has happened since?
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

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 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.