Reviewer’s report

Title: Unrecognized Implementation Science Engagement among Health Researchers in the United States: A national survey

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Reviewer: Luke Wolfenden

Reviewer's report:

This study examined the state of implementation Science (IS) awareness and engagement among health researchers. The study is well written, and is in itself novel. I did have a number concerns, however, that I have detailed below for the authors consideration

Perhaps most significantly, is that I don't understand the premise of the study. Why is it important that researchers identify as using IS methods? Particularly if they are not implementation scientists. And what is the significance of the prevalence estimate of those that do. Is 12.7% high or low? What should it be ideally? From what I gather from the background section of the manuscript the premise of the paper is that researchers using elements of IS in their research are should be aware of established methods in the implementation science discipline to ensure rigorous and impactful implementation science. However, this paper doesn't assess the use of established methods, or whether they have been applied appropriately. Instead it assessed a range of broad research 'elements' that are not unique to implementation science. Cost effectiveness, process evaluation, for example, were established methods across a range of scientific health and medical discipline long before there was an agreed definition of implementation science. As such, the finding that 93% of researchers report using IS elements in my view is not surprising, as these are 'elements' that are not unique to implementation. Similarly, what is it importance of a 'unrecognised IS engager'… they may still be conducting great research, using appropriate methods (by implementation standard). If the authors are essentially trying to identify if researchers doing implementation research aren't doing it properly/well/rigorously, then a study of the methodological quality of such research may have provided more direct evidence of this.

Perhaps the second major concern is that there was little justification of the importance or meaningfulness of the covariates selected. Why were these characteristics selected, what was the basis for a hypothesised relationship between IS engagement and these characteristics. The data presented seem to be opportunistically collected, and I am unsure what to make of evidence of the association.. particularly in light of the comment above.

More minor concerns

I understand this is a short communication, but it would have been useful to have more information, or to upload as appendices the measures used. The description provided in the methods and in the results tables doesn't give me a good handle of what exactly was measured.
Also is there any psychometrics available for the selected measure (even reliability?). Some of the cut points used to dichotomise key variables (e.g 'sometimes') probably also require further justification.

The authors should be congratulated on using the research data-base as a sampling frame rather than a convenience sample. While the response rate was similar to other author surveys (why is it so hard to get researchers to participate in research!) it was nonetheless low. As such, its hard to be confident in the estimated prevalence reported in the paper.

There was some typos throughout and the expression of some of the statistical findings could be tightened. For example, "IS awareness decreased unrecognized process/implementation evaluations"

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