Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding factors affecting patient and public engagement and recruitment to digital health interventions: a systematic review of qualitative studies

Version: 0 **Date:** 28 Apr 2016

Reviewer: Ray Jones

Reviewer's report:

The authors reviewed qualitative studies from 2000-2015 that explored factors affecting engagement in DHIs. Nineteen papers passed their selection criteria and were included.

My impression on reading this paper is that the conclusions are pretty much as anyone would have expected, i.e. rather 'motherhood and apple pie'. Anyone familiar with the literature that the authors have reviewed or excluded will find the conclusions and recommendations from this systematic literature review reassuring but may be asking 'so what?' What does this paper add? Both the papers reviewed and others excluded will have described the factors affecting uptake of e-health and may have suggested ways of 'measuring' or assessing (sometimes partially, sometimes more holistically) those factors (e.g. [1]).

Their conclusions ("More workengagement strategies.digital solutions personalised clinical accreditationcomputer literacy accessible affordable") are not unexpected or unknown. In fact, I am pretty sure that Mair. May et al have described these before in the introduction/justification of their work on NPT. So that is almost a starting point rather than a conclusion. Maybe what this paper does is to 'add rigour' and give more structure to that generally accepted understanding. I wonder if the construction of another 'theory' adds much. Perhaps we could see more justification of the need for the theory and what this adds over a 'common sense' understanding of the literature?

Therefore although this approach looking at this particular set of qualitative papers adds rigour to the literature and understanding of the adoption of DHI, I think the context, discussion, and conclusions need to be reframed. Can they relate their results back to the literature? Does it provide a new way of looking at the barriers to implementation? Would the authors of the 19 papers or of other papers excluded be able to use this current paper to better explain and discuss their findings?

So, I think there may be some different conclusions to be drawn. What this paper adds is not that we need 'more work on engagement strategies etc' but something more methodological about HOW we should study, classify, and address the barriers to implementation. I think it needs a

slight reframing to tell a better story about 'what this paper adds' including why building a theory is useful.

Or maybe I am missing something?

1. Jones, R. (2013) Development of a Questionnaire and Cross-Sectional Survey of Patient eHealth Readiness and eHealth Inequalities. Med 2.0, 2(2), e9.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
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