

Author's response to reviews

Title: Implementation research design: Integrating participatory action research into randomized controlled trials

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Author's response to reviews: see over

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Dear Dr. Mittman,

On behalf of my co-authors, I would like to thank you for the review of our revised manuscript "Implementation research design: integrating participatory action research into randomized controlled trials." We are appreciative of both the positive feedback and additional insights provided by the reviewers, and for the opportunity to respond to these comments.

Our revised manuscript has incorporated the specific reviewer suggestions, and I will outline these revisions below. Areas of the text that reflect these edits are highlighted in yellow.

Reviewer Waterman:

1. ***"The statement that PAR has consistency with CAS principles is unclear and needs rewriting."***

We have removed this statement and replaced it with a longer explanation of the consistency between CAS and PAR. This can be found in the last two sentences of the section "Why there is a need to consider different research methods in healthcare organizations."

2. ***PAR as indicated in Table 1 has also been influential in the health literature.***

We agree with this statement of the influence of PAR, and have added a sentence to this effect at the beginning of the second paragraph of the section "Participatory action research defined." This sentence leads into a summary of examples of PAR in the healthcare literature, which has been expanded.

3. ***"There seems to be an implicit assumption (that) participatory action research and participatory research are the same... This contested area needs acknowledging."***

We have added a sentence to the end of the section "Participatory action research defined" to make this distinction, as well as the distinction between PAR and action research, explicit.

4. ***"Table 1 – the references need updating."***

We have performed an updated literature search and added new references to both Table 1 and to the end of the section "Participatory action research defined" to provide the reader with additional examples of the variety of ways that PAR has been incorporated into health care research.

5. ***“I would remove the section on CQI? It does not really add anything.”***

We had added this section at the suggestion of Reviewer Braithwaite in his initial review. Because of the current emphasis on CQI and other quality improvement techniques in healthcare, we believe that it provides a useful context and contrast to the discussion of PAR.

6. ***“Table 2 is very useful. The elements... could be used as headings in the text. The authors can then discuss each in turn. For example, “Key elements...” is discussed well in the text but the other remaining six elements are not discussed or clarified...”***

Between the original submission and previous resubmission, we had significantly shortened the paper in order to simplify the framework and ideas presented. We were concerned that the addition of these headings would lengthen the paper and detract from main points. However, we agree with Reviewer Waterman’s point that more detail around these PAR/RCT elements would be helpful to the reader’s understanding of this proposed design. Therefore, we have added details related to the questions she poses in the section “How PAR may be integrated with RCT’s in implementation research design.”

We have also added an additional column to Table 2 to provide more specific examples of each element, and have changed the order in which the elements are listed to better group related concepts.

7. ***“An example of an implementation research study needs to be incorporated into the text...”***

We agree that this would be useful, and have added a general example of this approach as a new final paragraph for the section “How PAR may be integrated with RCT’s in implementation research design.”

Reviewer Braithwaite:

We edited the text to reflect the changes suggested in minor essential revisions 1-4. These consisted of specific wording changes and the addition of two references which had been erroneously omitted from the resubmission.

Minor essential revision 5 paralleled Reviewer Waterman’s suggestion that a more specific example of the implementation of the RCT/PAR model be added to the text as an “extra paragraph.” As mentioned in our response to Reviewer Waterman’s suggested revision #7, we have added such an example to the text. We purposefully tried to keep this example general so as to keep focus on the general PAR/RCT principles.

We would again like to thank Reviewers Waterman and Braithwaite for their encouragement, insights, and suggestions. We are appreciative of the opportunity to incorporate them into our manuscript.

Sincerely,
Luci Leykum