

Reviewer's report

Title: The role of theory in designing healthcare professional behaviour change interventions: the arguments for.

Version: 1 **Date:** 2 December 2005

Reviewer: Reuben McDaniel

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Somewhat more discussion of why health care implementation researchers have not used theory in their work would be helpful. In effect, I am suggesting that you suggest a theory about use/non-use of theory.
2. Some comment about the role of surprising and interesting theories would be helpful. See Murry Davis work, "That's Interesting". In general, surprising theories challenge our present belief systems. For example, "We used to believe that participation in decision making was an individual level construct." The purpose of this research is to show that it is an organizational level construct. When (and if) implementation researchers take the trouble to find and use interesting theories, then they will be able to stay at the middle range but make their work more novel and insightful.
3. Given that most implementation is a behavioral problem at some level of analysis, the lack of knowledge of health care or health service researchers about behavioral theory will, I think, be a great drawback to their use of explicit middle range theory. You touch on this in your conclusions section. Many of them "already know" how people, groups and organizations behave and why they behave that way. These strongly held implicit theories make it difficult for them to even find explicit middle range theories. And because the likelihood that a middle range theory will confirm an implicit theory is perhaps greater than 0 but much less than 1 makes the problem even more difficult. More could be said about this in the conclusions section of the paper. Some reference to these concerns might also be made in the introduction to the paper.
4. This paper has the interesting problem of being a paper about implementation researchers implementing a new way to approach the study of implementation. Therefore, there is undoubtedly some behavioral theory embedded in this paper. In other words the authors have beliefs about the cause of "no use of theory in implementation research". Therefore, the authors might consider making their theories (assumptions, etc.) about implementation researchers more explicit.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.