Title: Patient and Public involvement (PPI) in Realist Reviews: A Review of healthcare research and Reflective Questions for Researchers

Problem: Patient and public involvement (PPI) has been used in a variety of ways within evidence synthesis. However PPI within realist reviews has received less attention (Harris et al., 2015). This scoping review maps the ways in which PPI is used and reported within healthcare realist reviews published since the release of INVOLVE guidance on PPI in evidence synthesis (INVOLVE, 2014). We raise a series of reflexive questions for researchers to consider when using PPI in realist reviews.

Approach: A comprehensive search of electronic databases (CINAHL, Embase, PsychINFO and Medline) was undertaken with the support of an information specialist. 448 papers published between 2014-2019 were screened. Papers were included if they were realist reviews (i.e. not protocols, not systematic reviews) and made reference to PPI related terms.

Findings: 72 articles were included in this review. PPI use and reportage was mapped across each review using framework analysis (Spencer and Ritchie, 2014). Three themes were identified: missed opportunities; masked impact and motivated contexts.

Implications: PPI is often not clearly defined and little information is reported on the exact contributions of PPI. Our review findings contribute to future recommendations on the role of PPI in realist reviews and provide guidance to support researchers in their future collaboration with PPI participants.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

This review sought the perspective of two PPI representatives who had experiences of being involved in various different stages of a research cycle. Their stories shaped the types of questions we asked of our data and framed our findings.

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