Rationale

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Agenda for the hour

1. Topic Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Writing exercise: describe the rationale underlying your work (15 minutes)
3. Divide into pairs and alternate as author and reviewer to discuss your drafts (15 minutes).
4. Reactions and large group discussion (20 minutes)
Introducing “Rationale” in SQUIRE 2.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Why did you start?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Description</td>
<td>Nature and significance of the local problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available knowledge</td>
<td>Summary of what is currently known about the problem, including relevant previous studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>Informal or formal frameworks, models, concepts, and/or theories used to explain the problem, any reasons or assumptions that were used to develop the intervention(s), and reasons why the intervention(s) was expected to work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific aims</td>
<td>Purpose of the project and of this report</td>
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Acknowledging the presence of “Rationale”

- Informal theory is always present in improvement work - whether or not we recognize it
- Describing why and how we think an intervention will work is more complicated
  - Identify baseline assumptions
  - Define the mechanisms involved in the intervention
  - Include relevant features of context that are important to the success of an intervention
- A clearly stated rationale provides a basis for evaluating what happens once the intervention is implemented
  - Aids in identifying appropriate measures
  - Informs the approach to studying the intervention
Davidoff, et al define two approaches to describing a rationale:

“Any account that simply asserts that a meaningful interaction exists between variables... [or] that provides a coherent picture, in the form of a map or model, of a complex phenomenon or interactions...”

• **Illuminates the nature of the problem and why the intervention was developed**
• **Explains the mechanisms by which the intervention was expected to work in this context and at this time**

Why is writing about “Rationale” necessary?

• **Describing** a rationale requires clarity about what it was
• Transparency maximizes learning for the reader
• Promotes the transfer of knowledge from one project, or context to another, and contributes to a more general understanding of a problem
• The rationale for improvement work is often omitted
  – It sounds difficult, “theoretical”
  – Authors are unsure how to describe it
Describing a Rationale

Authors can approach rationale in a variety of ways

- Descriptive narrative
- A process map which clarifies the nature of the problem and the basis for the intervention
- A logic model which describes the mechanism by which the intervention is expected to work
- A conceptual framework which can be translated across multiple interventions and contexts
- The application of a formal theory of change to the specific problem

Because improvement work is often iterative, a rationale may also be refined as a result of experiential learning

- The rationale for the work should be revisited in the discussion section of a paper when summarizing lessons learned

Rationale guiding the development of an intervention

Rationale describing interaction with contextual factors

If:

Then:

So that:

So that:

A helpful framework for describing a rationale (from Davidoff, et al, 2015)

Davidoff, et al. BMJ Quality & Safety 2015;24:228-238
A Rationale for SQUIRE

If: Publication guidelines are useful (i.e. CONSORT) and writing about quality improvement work is inconsistent

Then: Authors writing about QI work might also benefit from guidelines

So that: Authors, improvers, and editors have a common framework and more people write about their QI work

So that: Better reports are published and more learning occurs

After G. Ogrinc, personal communication, 2015

Summary
“Rationale” in SQUIRE 2.0

• Improvement work always has an underlying rationale, whether or not it is acknowledged
• A well-crafted rationale should explain why an intervention is expected to work
  – in a given context
  – at a given time
• A simple structure can be used to help authors describe a rationale
• The rationale for the work should be revisited in the summary section of the paper
Describe the Rationale for your QI work

• Consider an effort that you are now part of or are planning to initiate to increase the quality, safety, or value of healthcare services
• Draft a paragraph describing the rationale for your work (15 minutes)
  – Why did you think this intervention(s) would be effective in this setting at this point in time?
• Take turns to share with a partner (15 min total)
• Large group debrief (20 min)

Large Group Discussion

• How did this feel?
• What was the hardest part?
• How did working with a partner go?
A helpful framework for developing a rationale

If:

Then:

So that:

So that:

Davidoff, et al, 2015