

# Call for Papers for Health Services Research Special Issue on Mixed Methods in Healthcare Delivery Systems Research

Submission deadline: October 15, 2012

## Sponsored by Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Health Services Research and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) are partnering to publish a Special Issue on Mixed Methods in Healthcare Delivery Systems Research. Although mixed methods research has been defined in various ways, for this call the following definition captures the essence: Mixed methods research combines and systematically integrates quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study to obtain a fuller picture and deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2007). The aim of the special issue is to provide researchers, funders, and policy makers with a better understanding of how mixed methods studies may contribute to health services research and to promote and facilitate the expanded use of mixed methods designs in delivery system research. This issue will consist of reports on results from exemplary mixed-methods studies and papers that advance an understanding of principles underlying mixed methods research or address specific methodological challenges in this type of research. The papers will illustrate how mixed methods can be used to advance research on care delivery, delivery systems, and the implementation delivery system change. Papers are particularly encouraged that use mixed methods to illuminate the implementation and effects of recent changes in payment, reporting, and design of care delivery. Contributions from outside of the United States are welcome, subject to the journal's guidelines (see "International Manuscript Submissions" <http://www.hsr.org/hsr/information/authors/instruauthors.jsp> for guidance).

There is growing interest in mixed methods research among health services researchers (Weiner et. al. 2011). In 2010, the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the National Institutes of Health convened a multi-disciplinary team to develop guidance for NIH investigators on how to rigorously develop and evaluate mixed methods research applications ([http://obssr.od.nih.gov/scientific\\_areas/methodology/mixed\\_methods\\_research/index.aspx](http://obssr.od.nih.gov/scientific_areas/methodology/mixed_methods_research/index.aspx)).

During the same period, AHRQ convened a meeting on Advancing Delivery System Research. A prominent recommendation from the meeting (<http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/deliverysys/2011mtg/mtgsumm.htm#messages>) was that researchers make more use of mixed methods designs and, particularly, that research designs and analysis techniques seek synergies across qualitative and quantitative data (Alexander and Hearld, 2012). Organizations including AHRQ, OBSSR, The Veteran's Administration, and AcademyHealth have recently conducted symposia and workshops on mixed methods.

Despite growing interest in mixed methods, to date no leading health services journal has devoted an entire issue to this topic. With this Special Issue, AHRQ and HSR aim to encourage researchers to apply these methods to delivery systems research and further develop the available methodologies for mixed methods research. We seek outstanding studies that use mixed methods to generate important empirical findings on delivery systems and/or help advance the field of mixed methods research. The mixed methods of greatest interest will intentionally combine two or more methods of data gathering and analysis so as to exploit the strengths of each method and create synergies among them

(Creswell et al., 2011). Of particular interest are studies that “mix” data (Zhang and Creswell, 2012) by merging or embedding data from different sources, rather than simply connecting methods in a sequence. Empirical papers should be distinguished by their methodological rigor and by their ability to provide important findings on health care delivery and attempts to improve care delivery. We also hope to include papers that offer solutions to critical methodological problems, refine and specify existing techniques, or describe innovative methods.

Criteria for selection of original research manuscripts will include:

1. Methodological quality, rigor, and originality
2. Contribution to mixed methods research
3. Contribution to knowledge about the focal topic or issue
4. Clarity of writing and presentation

Criteria for selection of methodological contributions will include:

1. Contribution to mixed methods research
2. Innovativeness – advances the field beyond currently available guides and examples
3. Clarity of writing and presentation

Manuscripts submitted for this Special Issue will undergo the usual HSR peer review process, coordinated by Special Issue Guest Editors Benjamin Crabtree and William Miller and Senior Associate Editor Mary Fennell from HSR. Accepted manuscripts for this Special Issue will be published in print as a set in December 2013: however, each accepted article will be published electronically within a few weeks of its acceptance (i.e., as soon as it has undergone production and copyediting processes) using Wiley-Blackwell's Early View process. Articles published through Early View are fully published, appear in PubMed, and can be cited with the effective date of online posting. All manuscripts must follow the "Instructions for Authors"

<http://www.hsr.org/hsr/information/authors/instruauthors.jsp#nine>. When ready to submit, please go to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hsr>.

### **Key dates for authors:**

- Deadline for receipt of manuscripts: October 15, 2012
- Potential advance online publication dates: June 2013 - November 2013
- Print publication date for the Special Issue: December 2013

For questions, please email HSR Managing Editor, Meighan Schreiber at [mschreiber@aha.org](mailto:mschreiber@aha.org).

### **References**

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