Reviewer's report

Title: The development of an internet-based outpatient cardiac rehabilitation intervention: a Delphi study

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Reviewer: Matthias Weigl

Reviewer's report:

Review Manuscript

'The development of an internet-based outpatient cardiac rehabilitation intervention: a Delphi study' Corneel Vandelanotte, Trudy Dwyer, Anetta Van Itallie, Christina Hanley and W. Kerry Mummery

BMC Cardiovascular Disorders Research article

General Remarks:
Outpatient rehabilitation programs are an important issue in rehabilitation services, especially dealing with patients in remote locations or rural areas. Internet-based-OCR programs are a promising approach to ensure high quality rehabilitation in those settings. The present study presents a three round Delphi study among experts to identify issues relevant for development of OCR intervention. The authors provide valuable insights and recommendations on relevant features of internet-based OCR interventions. The findings reveal information regarding further developmental approaches and design features of internet-based OCR-interventions.

The manuscript is written and structured well. The manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to make)

Major Compulsory Revisions
- Method section: “All the questions of in this three round Delphi study were pre-tested among experts in the field of cardiac-rehabilitation research” – the authors should provide more information on this issue because this is essential for the development of the initial questions and therefore for the subsequent study steps
- First round: “11 open ended questions” – a more precise explanation regarding the source of those questions is necessary
- Discussion, p14: “showed a high rate of consensus (74%) and relevance (57%)”
  - are there rules of thumb, conventions, or recommendations, what is considered a “high” rate of either consensus or relevance? (this relates also to the later sentence, p15, “Nevertheless, consensus on these topics was very high”)
- Limitations, p16: despite the representativeness of the sample, may further
selection bias have occurred? (your criteria include such as previous conference visits, E-Mail access)

- Limitations, p16, there is no discussion regarding potential disadvantages of the Delphi Technique in general; did the authors consider this in preparing the manuscript? (e.g. time consuming procedure of the technique; handling of divergent opinions or dissent estimations)

- Conclusions, p16, p17: “In many ways the experts indicated that an Internet-based ORC program should mimic a traditional face-to-face program, and emphasize the crucial role of the cardiac rehabilitation manager who interacts with patients from a distance”: you may elaborate more this conclusion due that this is a major finding of the present study

Minor Essential Revisions

- p4, 2nd paragraph (citation [6]) – you speak of “overwhelming evidence” and cite only one single study; is there further empirical support for this statement, any further literature?

- p4: last line of the page (there is a point before the citations [12, 13]

- p5: “However, only a very limited number of Internet-based OCR programs have been developed and evaluated [27]” – this sentence could be more specific, that the programs were dealing with CVD Patients

- the first paragraph of the method section can be shortened (the introductory part on the Delphi Technique and the main reasons for its use could be merged)

- Table 1: information regarding the scale range should be provided in the table’s notes

- Heading Table 1: information regarding the sample size (N) is missing

- p12: Numeric outcomes: “support group members” – please explain who is meant here?

- p13: paragraph “relevance and consensus” – the first sentence is difficult to understand;

- p13: paragraph “relevance and consensus” – what is meant by “step count” (please provide an explanation)

Discretionary Revisions

None

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