Reviewer's report

Title: The UPBEAT depression and coronary heart disease programme: Using the UK Medical Research Council Framework to design a nurse-led complex intervention for use in primary care.

Version: 1 Date: 30 August 2012

Reviewer: Molly Byrne

Reviewer's report:

The UPBEAT depression and coronary heart disease prevention programme: Using the UK MRC Framework to design a nurse-led complex intervention for use in primary care

This manuscript describes the development of an intervention to improve mood and cardiac outcomes in patients with CHD, following the recently revised MRC framework. It is very useful for researchers to have access to examples of this process to facilitate best practice in intervention development.

This is a well written manuscript, from a research team who have already published their literature review and first qualitative research study with GPs and PNs which also form part of this study. They are about to publish the protocol for the RCT for the UPBEAT intervention. It is excellent to see all phases of the intervention development being published.

I applaud this research team for tackling a very challenging area, namely, the management of depression in general practice for people with CHD. However, I have two suggestions for revision, which I think may improve the paper.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. Provide more detail on rationale for selection of theory and details of how the theory is operationalised in the intervention. The authors state ‘The overaching theory reflected by the evidence we identified and suggested by our impirical work was that the intervention should focus on enhancing self-management’ (paragraph 2, ‘Triangulation of findings, iterative evidence review and application of theory to form the intervention’). This appears to come out of the blue and it would be useful to hear more about:
   (a) why this theory was selected
   (b) what is exactly meant by self-management in this context,
   (c) the proposed mechanisms between self-management and reducing depression,
   (d) the evidence to support this theory in the current context.

2. I would like further justification of the inclusion of ‘behaviour change interventions’ within the intervention, including the selection of goal setting and
action planning. The first sentence of the first paragraph of the section entitled ‘Adaptation of the intervention following modelling’ states ‘The focus group indicated that the intervention would, on the whole, be acceptable to patients’. This sentence does not seem to me to summarise data reported in the previous section. It appears that patients were suggesting that they needed something quite different (more social support, something to ease their loneliness and generally someone familiar in the practice with whom they could talk about problems). I understand that there are limits to what is possible in primary care, but it would be useful to hear how the authors suggest these needs of the patients will be addressed within the intervention, which seems largely to focus on behaviour change.

Decision: Major compulsory revisions.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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'