Reviewer's report

Title: Supporting health behaviour change in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease with telephone health-mentoring: insights from a qualitative study

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Reviewer: Dianne Goeman

Reviewer's report:

1. Appropriateness of research question, title? Adherence to relevant standards of reporting? Does it build on previous research?

This is a well written paper that reports on the role of community nurses trained to act as health-mentors to support health behaviour change in people with COPD.

Due to the increase in the number of older people in the population and the projected increase in COPD there is a need for the development of cost-effective interventions that support self-management such as this one. Research reporting on the patient’s perspective is also frequently neglected, however, and I commend the authors for providing participants’ insights into the efficacy of the intervention.

This authors adequately discuss previous interventions and how this study builds on previous telephone interventions targeted to increasing physical activity in those with hypertension and type 2 diabetes but did not include a patient perspective or facilitation of patient choice.

2. Methods: are they appropriate and well described? Are the data sound?

A purposive sample of 90 participants with COPD was recruited from the general practice setting. Forty-four of the 56 participants who completed the twelve month health-mentoring intervention agreed to also participate in a telephone interview. The authors state that this sub-sample (58%) were representative of the total group in relationship to their age, COPD severity and co-morbid conditions.

Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim and analysed by two members of the research team using an iterative thematic approach. The data were then coded independently by two researchers according to themes relating to health behaviour change and mentoring. All authors discussed the themes and examined the data in relation to participant demographics, characteristics.

The qualitative approach chosen by the authors, the sampling strategy and the use of semi-structured interviews, were appropriate for exploration of this topic, to gain insight into the adoption and maintenance of healthy behaviours related to chronic disease self-management and also to identify any barriers to change. Qualitative data analysis was undertaken according to well-recognised methods. The authors do not state as to whether participants were provided the opportunity
to confirm the transcripts of their interviews or comment on the themes identified by the researchers.

3. Discussion/conclusion well-balanced? Limitations?
The discussion and conclusion are well balanced and limitations reported. The authors acknowledge that achieving and maintaining health behaviour change is difficult, particularly in those with COPD due to helplessness reinforced by repeated bad experiences and conclude that their qualitative insights on how health-mentoring supports autonomy in health behaviour adoption or maintenance and can be effective in increasing self-motivation for change.

4. Minor revisions
The second sentence in the second last paragraph of the introduction appears to be missing a word.
There are also several other sentences that appear to have missing words or that do not read well. These should be addressed.

**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.