Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring the feasibility of a community-based strength training program for older people with depressive symptoms and its impact on depressive symptoms: a randomised controlled trial

Version: 3 Date: 23 September 2006

Reviewer: Archie YOUNG

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The control intervention was not adequate as an attention control. Any hint that the experimental group might have benefited more than the control group may be due to the PRT itself, to attention from exercise instructors and others directly associated with the PRT, or to the weekly telephone calls received by the members of the experimental group. This should be appropriately acknowledged in several places, including:

1. Abstract
2. Para 5 of Discussion
3. Para 1 of Conclusions

The authors’ claims extrapolate too far beyond their data. Claims which should be toned down include:

1. In the Conclusion section of the Abstract, the words “for the widespread benefit of older people” should be deleted.
2. In the penultimate sentence of para 1 of the Discussion, the claim that the study “provided preliminary support for PRT for older people” should be removed.

From the first two paragraphs of the section on Objectives and Outcomes, it is evident that the main study objective was not matched by the primary outcome. This dissonance should be corrected.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Semantic corrections required include:

1. In 4th sentence of Background - regimen
2. In 6th sentence of Background - suggest
3. In 1st sentence of Randomisation Procedure and Allocation Concealment - “and/or” appears to have been used incorrectly
4. In para 1 of Recruitment Results - >11
5. In 2nd sentence of Participant Characteristics - was
6. In 1st sentence of Follow Up - were
7. In 4th sentence of Adherence to the Exercise Program - criterion
8. Most of the contents of table 2 have been struck out.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'