Reviewer’s report

Title: Exercise therapy in adults with serious mental illness: systematic review and meta-analysis.

Version: 2 Date: 8 November 2013

Reviewer: linda chafetz

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Minor essential revisions:

1. In the introduction, where the authors review literature on the poor health of the mentally ill, the tone of the writing is often very absolute, presenting findings of a specific cited report as an absolute truth. Some editing to qualify this type of statements would be helpful. A good example is in paragraph 1 of the introduction where figures are presented for loss of life expectancy among the SMI with a citation from a study by Laursen. While this figure and those reported elsewhere do not differ dramatically, there is a range. Qualifying the sentence with a phrase such as, in a study of a Danish sample, rates for adults with schizophrenia were....."

2. Also in the introduction, there is a statement about motivation as a factor in poor health that merits qualification. This is often repeated in the literature but sometimes with weak substantiation. The citation for this is not a primary source and in fact is a review article that cites another secondary source that mentions possible motivation issues. This is more than a question of form: some of the readily accepted “truths” about the SMI are based what may insufficient evidence and have potential to stigmatize this population further.

3. The introduction focuses almost solely on health behaviors (with a nod to genetics) as the source of health problems and seriously underplays the role of medications that are major sources not only of obesity and metabolic dysfunction. This should be corrected.

3. As noted above, the description of the literature search is well done, but the list of search terms is overly detailed and if needed for replicability might be included in a box or table to preserve the flow of the text.

5. On page twelve, in the discussion, there is a lot of material that is redundant with the introduction. It detracts from readability and from the focus on study findings.

6. The conclusions might touch on why the authors have found so few RCTs on exercise alone vs. exercise as part of more comprehensive wellness plans, since this seems to have an important impact on what we know about exercise among this population.
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.