Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding the problems developing a healthy living programme in individuals with serious mental illness: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 14 October 2013

Reviewer: Daniel Bateman

Reviewer's report:

This is a qualitative paper describing attitudes, views and experiences of adults with serious mental illness who declined to participate in a healthy living programme. Thirteen adults with serious mental illness who declined participation in a healthy living programme were interviewed. In the interviews specific barriers to participation, attitudes toward healthy living, and difficulties individuals encountered when trying to improve health practices were explored. Whether being part of a research study may have affected participation in the healthy living programme was also studied.

This paper has several strengths. The topic of early mortality and high medical co-morbidity in adults with serious mental illness and need for psychosocial interventions that effectively address these problems is a very important public health issue. Examining the population who did not participate in the healthy living programme can be an effective way of learning this populations' needs and can potentially lead to improvements in healthy lifestyle interventions. Pearsall's descriptions of the views of people with SMI toward healthy lifestyle programs, barriers to their participation in and recruitment into these programs is a useful addition to the scientific literature.

Discretionary Revisions
1) Would consider showing some of the patient interview excerpts in a graphic form or table

Minor Essential Revisions:
1) In terms of methods, who did the interviewing?
2) Would avoid the use of the first person, "I", in the writing

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1) The abstract needs to succinctly summarize the methods and results as described later in the paper.
2) Need more data on the patient population. Other than mean age of 54.6, half being female, and all having a diagnosis of either schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder or bipolar disorder, what are other characteristics of the population (medical comorbidity, education level, etc.). A table 1 describing characteristics of the 13 patients would be helpful.
3) Would try to make the message in the discussion under the “lessons learned” paragraph clearer. Several lessons were described. Which have the potential to be the most important and have implications for future research?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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