Reviewer’s report

Title: Using intervention mapping (IM) to develop a self-management program for employees with a chronic disease in the Netherlands

Version: 6 Date: 1 February 2010

Reviewer: Dee W Edington

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I and three of our senior analysts reviewed this manuscript. The authors state in the early background section that, “The objective of the article is to present the development and content of this program.” We found the manuscript very difficult to understand especially since the manuscript focused primarily on the literature review throughout. We found it hard to determine if the objective was a literature review, a concept paper, a description of a program or description of some preliminary results.

We assumed that this is considered a research study to demonstrate the use of Intervention Mapping for the development and content of a self-management program but we cannot determine when and where any research was conducted. Seven pages were spent on an explanation of the IM technique and CDSMP. Much of the manuscript reads like a literature and an academic review. But we could have read about those directly from their source material (references 25 and 26).

The methods are simply a more detailed explanation of the IM process. The six steps are expounded upon and we were still waiting to understand where and how this process was applied in research. There is nothing mentioned about a setting, the population or the analysis techniques.

The results continue the literature review as far as we can tell from four people reading the manuscript. Page 10 says that qualitative research was conducted for the needs assessment but we did not see any information about that. Then many more pages are spent writing about the development of the intervention.

The authors laid out each of the 6 steps but never actually explained their findings. We were not sure what information they gathered from their literature review and what they gathered from their focus groups. We also found it odd that they used focus groups to access what employees needed on a large scale - when the actual steps called for individualized evaluation and treatment. Instead of following the steps - they assessed what the employees thought of the steps - but it appears that they never actually tried the steps or they just did not include those results in this manuscript.

Finally on page 18 it appears that they had a plan for implementing the intervention. It mentions participant recruitment briefly and then at the bottom of page 19 it says more details about the evaluation of the intervention and results
will be presented in a separate article. That is the article we would like to read.

The authors then moved to a brief discussion about the merits of IM. The conclusion states that "it has been proven that it is feasible to apply IM for the development and the tailoring of prevention interventions in occupational health care." We see no basis for this conclusion in the paper they submitted.

The description of the six steps suggests that the work is going to require several years of study. The authors may want to condense this manuscript into a purely concept paper and then select several research project in a logical order to develop the evidence. The papers they write at that time should allow them to focus on their own methods and results rather than such a lengthy explanation of IM.

**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'