Reviewer’s report

Title: Media coverage of health issues and how to work more effectively with journalists: a qualitative study.

Version: 1 Date: 16 June 2010

Reviewer: Darrin Hodgetts

Reviewer’s report:

Overall this is an interesting article that speaks to health professionals. The paper is a little overly descriptive and there is little engagement with theoretical explanations for why journalists function the way they do and why some topics and approaches to health such as the conservative emphasis on diet and exercise is emphasized at the expense of socio-economic explanations for health inequities.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes
3. Are the data sound? Yes (although telephone interviews are not ideal in terms of getting inside the complexities of professional practice)
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Yes (although in setting out recommendations for how health professionals might work with journalists the authors could make more use of guidelines for media advocacy and associated practical recommendations)
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes (all research is limited and the limitations of this project are self evident)
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes, the article is logically structured and well written.