Reviewer’s report

Title: Internet and game behaviour at a secondary school and a newly developed health promotion programme: a prospective study

Version: 1 Date: 24 February 2010

Reviewer: Jan Van den Bulck

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting study. I think it lacks detail: there are a number of parts which could use a bit more clarification. I also think that the authors overstate the limitation that this study was done in a particular setting and in a particular country.

I do not have many objections, but there is one major issue I think the authors need to address. I offer two solutions to this problem, but the authors may have a better one.

Major compulsory revisions

on p. 5 you introduce what I feel is a fundamental flaw in your study: you decide that the top 20% internet and computer game users are "compulsive" and the bottom 20% are not. Whether people use a lot of the media depends on many elements (more leisure time means more use, for instance), so overall volume is probably a poor indicator. This is especially strange because you refer to literature on internet use as addiction, and you are obviously aware of how to measure addiction (even though you could have provided us with more information on that point, too). I understand that it is impossible to introduce variables that weren't in the study at this stage, but if you use volume I feel you need a more objective measure - not just the 20% cut-off point. For instance: you could refer to existing studies and try to argue that a particular level of use (X number of hours?) is considered to be compulsive or addictive. Alternatively I would stop using the word "compulsive" and simply speak of "heavy users" or something like that.

Minor essential revisions

Discretionary revisions

on p. 3 you state "In recent years, however, many Dutch schools have implemented..." - this is a rather narrow view. I would suggest looking for either a number of examples from different countries or, even better, an overview article showing us that many countries apply this sort of prevention. This would suggest more relevance of your study. Now it looks as if this only applies to the Netherlands.

p. 5 "These lessons covered several aspects of Internet use, such as digital communication, online bullying, online imago, online sexuality, distorted beauty
ideal, and Internet advertisements. The teachers were trained and assisted by experts,"

I think you need to tell us a bit more about how this was developed. There is a lot of research on "media literacy" - did you use that? Who were these experts? What kind of background did they have?

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests