Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring recruitment, willingness to participate, and retention of low-SES women in stress and depression prevention

Version: 1 Date: 21 July 2010

Reviewer: Josephine Etowa

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Reviewer comment
   Both the research aim and study design need to be described more clearly.
   The two research aims do not seem to be closely aligned with the research problem/knowledge gap identified by the authors e.g. in two places under the “Background” section- ie, last sentence of paragraph 1 and the first sentence of the last paragraph, they clearly identify the research problem as a gap in knowledge about the “factors affecting recruitment, willingness to participate, and retention in depression prevention”. However, the two aims of the study are:
   - “The first aim of this study was thus to explore the feasibility of different strategies for recruiting low-SES women from disadvantaged communities for a preventive intervention targeting coping with depressive symptoms and stressors. -A second aim was to determine whether sociodemographic characteristics and risk status are associated with the successful recruitment and retention of these women.”
   -Based on the problem identified by the authors, one would expect the aim of the study to be focussed on the factors affecting Low SES women’s participation in depression prevention programs/intervention. This aim is more appropriate for the study design (sample of low SES women only)
   -I’d suggest that the authors change the word “feasibility” bolded in the “first aim” above to “effectiveness” because the strategies are feasible but varies in their degrees of success or effectiveness.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Reviewer comment: If one of the aims of the study is to “determine whether socio-demographic characteristics and risk status are associated with the successful recruitment and retention of these women’ as the authors stated in the last paragraph of the “Background” section, then the study sample should include both wealthy and Low SES women/people to be able to assess multiple aspects of the socio-demographic characteristics and risk status. The method section indicated a sample of only “low-SES women aged 20–55 years, with elevated stress or depressive symptoms.”
   -The rest of the method section and the procedure are clearly articulated. But the first section may need some rewording to enhance clarity.
Are the data sound?
Reviewer comment:
Under “methods, paragraph 1, lines 9-10“-The authors indicated that “years of formal education is found to be a valid single estimator of socioeconomic status”. Is this true for all the people who have graduate degrees including PhD but work as taxi drivers and hotel cleaners? This is common experience among immigrant population. See Dr Grace Edward-Galabuze’s (2005) Economic Apartheid.... Maybe this is not the case in the country of study. However, their analysis will be strengthened by providing multiple viewpoints regarding this statement.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Reviewer comment: Yes

4. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Reviewer comment: Yes

5. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Reviewer comment: Yes

6. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Reviewer comment: Yes

7. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Reviewer comment: Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Reviewer comment: Yes, overall, the writing style of the manuscript is very good. However, the background section, beginning of the method section and research aims may need to be reworded for clarity and to align the aims more closely with the argument presented by the authors. See details in my comment above.

-My comments 1 and 2 above are categorized as “minor essential revisions’ so based on my assessment of the validity of the manuscript, I would advise that the manuscript be “accepted for publication after minor essential revisions” (which the authors can be trusted to make).

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**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'