Reviewer's report

Title: A partnership between Health Psychology and Public Health - a review of a novel training project

Version: 1 Date: 28 June 2010

Reviewer: Susan Michie

Reviewer's report:

This article describes two Health Psychology projects aimed at behaviour change in relation to public health in the Scottish National Health Service, UK. It describes the challenges facing public health specialists attempting to deliver behaviour change interventions and explains the contribution that Health Psychology (HP) can make to this.

The paper describes interesting and potentially valuable work addressing public health issues within a health service. It raises important issues such as how you select and apply appropriate theories from health psychology to applied public health work and how techniques are selected within intervention design. However, it does not provide empirical data to demonstrate the benefits of health psychology claimed e.g. to support statements such as “The evaluation highlighted the unique contribution made by THPs, and reflects the significant contribution of THPs to local health improvement targets …”. It also does not provide replicable methods.

The structure of the paper is difficult. It would read better if the public health aims of the HP training programme were presented in the Introduction and the contribution of the projects were evaluated within this framework. Much more detail needs to be given about precise aims, methods and empirical findings.

The work presented here should be set in a broader context – are there examples in the literature of similar Health Psychology approaches in other countries? Or other approaches to tackle the same problems? Examples of the application of health psychology (see refs 37-45) should be from peer-reviewed publications, not unpublished reports or personal communication – there are certainly plenty of published reports to choose from.

Small points:

The word “project” is used to describe both the training of health psychologists and the projects carried out by them: it would be less confusing if e.g. programme was used for the overall training project.

‘health trainers’ should be ‘NHS Health Trainers’

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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