Reviewer’s report

Title: Mothers’ AdvocateS In the Community (MOSAIC) - non-professional mentor support to reduce intimate partner violence and depression in mothers: a cluster randomised trial in primary care

Version: 1 Date: 24 September 2010

Reviewer: Michele Kiely

Reviewer’s report:

Minor Essential Revisions

Introduction

In the second paragraph the authors begin by saying “early policy responses...” but it is unclear by whom. If they authors mean in Melbourne or Australia they need to be more explicit.

The authors say that the study was located in primary care as there is limited evidence from this setting. Perhaps it is the way it is written, but I did not find it compelling. Perhaps the authors mean that they need to validate such a program’s use in a primary care setting. Or it is located there because this is a place where the women they were interested in could actually be found?

Methods

The authors should specify the total number of GP clinics and MCH clinics from which their sample was drawn.

Were there any criteria for the mentors? While they include the reference, a sentence or two about the training the mentors received would be an important addition.

The goal of the study at the end of the introduction does not completely match the objective listed in the methods section. Although it is listed in the objectives, I didn’t see any specific measure of maternal-child bonding.

The authors should specify what the original sample size they needed to show a difference. I commend the authors for being up front about their “lower than expected” recruitment.

Not that it truly helps now, but the baseline and follow-up could have been completed by someone blind to the randomization status.

Results

The cost analysis seemed under-developed. If the authors want to keep it there (and I do think it is important) they should consider the additional costs of more
services utilized as well as it being balanced by a reduction in expensive care, such as emergency room use or the cost to the state if they need to put the children in foster care, etc.

Discussion

Calling this study large seems to overstate their case. I consider it a small study.

I think that the first paragraph overstressed the strength of their results. Yes there is a consistent trend towards a favorable outcome, but I think the fact that the number of women abused is only tending toward significance makes their discussion too strong.

There needs to be more discussion of their limitations. Clearly there was bias in who was being referred to the mentors. I suspect that the intervention group was more actively recruiting and the authors should consider how that might affect their results.

Minor Discretionary Comments

The allocation ratio is specified in the discussion, but it belongs in the methods. The first time the authors use the abbreviation CAS, they should specify what it means.

On page 7, the first time propensity scores are mentioned is the time to insert the abbreviation.

I don’t like the way Table 1 is designed. It doesn’t facilitate comparisons.

Other comments

On page 8, the authors used the term “commenced study.” I suspect this is a difference between Australian and United States English or use of terminology. I presume they mean the women went back to school.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.