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:** 1 November 2010

**Reviewer:** Leslie L. L. Davidson

**Reviewer's report:**

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

**Tables/Figures**

The two supplementary files should be part of the manuscript to be published.

Table 1 It is not clear from the text why Table 1 does not contain information on the SF36, Social Support and Parenting Stress for the women lost to f/u. since Figure 1 states that these were conducted at baseline for all participants. These scores should be included in Table 1.

**Text**

Eligibility: There is too little information on both primary care criteria for referral/eligibility and also on secondary recruitment criteria for eligibility.

Analysis: The authors should explain how the ICC was calculated, how results were adjusted for the cluster design and why they decided to analyse by individual rather than by cluster.

The authors postulate that social support might be an effect modifier and adjust for it in the outcomes (Table 3) but do not explain why given their results.

**Minor Essential Revisions**

**Tables/Figures**

Table 2 contains information on 76 of the 90 intervention women who were followed to the end of the study (the 76 includes 9 women who did not need to use or did not want services. It is not clear from the table how this information was collected and by whom and also why there was no data on the 14/90 not included in the table. The text referring to the table indicates the data came from the participant report. The Title uses the word “encouraged” and the headings use the word “offered”. This could be clearer. It is not really clear what services the mentor provided herself and which were referrals out. This would be a helpful distinction, one which would help the reader distinguish a bit between mentoring and advocacy.

Figure 2 should be clarified. It is difficult to follow: for example – I would suggest adding percentages to the boxes to assist the reader in interpreting the drop/out lost to follow up figures: eg 91 women referred by 33/57 (58%) comparison clinics. It is not clear to me the difference in the intervention group between the
10 women lost to follow-up, the 6 women with initial contact after recruitment, and the 10/90 who declined the intervention. Was the only difference that the 10/90 completed the final surveys including the outcome measures? Only the 90 women were included in the intention to treat analysis.

Text

Objectives: “GPs or MCH nurses identify as abused or at risk” It is not clear what is meant by at risk – this should be clarified. The other primary objective “to strengthen the general health and wellbeing and …. “. Authors should add “of mothers” since they do on to address mother-child bonding.

Mentor training: while recognizing that full details of mentor training are available online – a brief summary would be helpful particularly in differentiating between impact or lack of impact on the various outcome measures.

Sample size: Was the 16% reduction used in the power estimation meant to mean that 16% of the women moved from over the cutoff at baseline to under the cutoff at end of study? Or did it mean that there was a 16% reduction in EPDS or CAS scores in the intervention group compared to the control group. What was the estimated sample size initially- was it on the based of a power or 80 or higher for the primary outcomes?

Documenting the intervention: Did the coordinators interview all participants or just those in the intervention group? Figure 1 does not indicate this but the text seems to imply it in this section. Please clarify this.

Analysis: There is only 1 IPV measure but 2 outcomes using the EPDS and also the SF36 scores as well as 2 parenting measures listed. It would be useful to have a bit more in the analysis section on how these were apriori combined to arrive at the main study findings. Table 3 lists them all separately.

Discretionary Revisions

Figures and Tables

Since Table 1 only covers those lost to follow-up after recruitment, it would be useful to have some information on those who could not be contacted and those who declined to participate if it is available on those referred and eligible but not recruited or lost to f/u before consent.

Text

Baseline characteristics: The comment regarding Aboriginal Australian women giving birth is not clear, since the trial included a range of women who could be interviewed in English and a Vietnamese subgroup and did not exclude Aboriginal women. It would be interesting to include the proportion of women with both Depression and IPV and those with only depression or only IPV.

Discussion: The major difficulty encountered by the trial team was the less than optimal and differential recruitment to the trial by the clinics. Recruitment is a major challenge for most trials but even more so for trials addressing partner violence. Many approaches have been taken to ensure adequate recruitment. This is addressed by them in ....... Given that length is not limiting, it would be helpful if they included both more information on information available to them on
factors which led providers not to recruit and on their thoughts on how to overcome these in future work. This is essential information for those who seek to continue intervention trials.

Avoiding the problem: the authors speculate that randomizing after referral might have reduce numbers even further but equally it might have increase it.

It is not clear to this reader why immediate outcome measurement might have biased the results as suggested by the authors though clearly an effect might soon attenuate so that whether there was a sustained effect remains unclear.

The paragraph on the comparison to the McFarlane study is not clear.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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