Author's response to reviews

Title: Locally adapted problem-solving therapy for depression and common mental disorders in primary care in Zimbabwe delivered through lay workers and a Friendship Bench: a pilot study of effectiveness

Authors:

Dixon D Chibanda (dichi@zol.co.zw)
Petra Mesu (petra.mesu@zol.co.zw)
L Kajawu (lkajawu@gmail.com)
Melanie Abas (melanie.abas@kcl.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 23 December 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor

We thank you and the reviewers for the helpful and constructive comments. We have made many changes to the paper as a result. Here we detail responses to the comments from the specific reviewers

Reviewer: Mark Tomlinson

We are grateful that this reviewer states that this is a publishable paper. We agree with his suggestion of substantial revisions to this paper, which is what we have done.

Major compulsory revisions

We have streamlined the paper to focus on the phase two of the study where we present the quantitative data of the 948 participants. The first phase is mentioned in the background as work leading to the pilot study. We have provided changes in SSQ scores for the 948 participants, thus we have referred to the study as a 'Pilot study of effectiveness'. We have included a third Table showing the mean SSQ scores by category of scores as 8-10 (moderate) and 11+ (high score). We have included data from the evaluation of intervention by the lay health workers including qualitative information about the lay health workers' experiences through the focus group discussion which was not mentioned previously.

Compulsory revision

1. We have omitted the use of the term 'cost effectiveness' and we have used the alternative suggested, which indeed makes sense, 'low cost alternative'.
2. We have removed the statistics in the abstract but we have left the mean scores before and after the intervention.
3. We have refrained from generalizing our findings to the rest of Africa, we have removed 'Africa' from the abstract.
4. We have added more information about the Friendship bench, how it started and where these benches are physically situated is mentioned.
5. We have looked at the grammar mentioned on page 3-3rd line and changed it accordingly. The paragraph on limitations has been further changed to improve on the grammar.
6. We have referred to Kufungisisa as a local concept and refrained from generalizing the community awareness.
7. We have described the prayer as part of the home visit further.
8. Prayer as a routine intervention by lay health workers is discussed.
9. Changes have been made on page 6-4th line to read 'were requested to complete a questionnaire'.
10. All sentences starting with a number have been changed to start with the number written in words.
11. Reasons for changing the threshold for referral is explained in the section on FGD and discussed further in the discussion.
12. The long paragraph at end of page seven has been removed completely.

Conclusion
We have tried to address all the issues raised by this reviewer whose comments have been very helpful in establishing a focus for the paper.

Reviewer: John Cape
We appreciate the positive remarks made by this reviewer.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. We have addressed the major issues noted by the reviewer by changing most of the manuscript, in particular the focus. We have streamlined the paper to focus on the larger sample size (n=948) in phase two and we have focused on the changes in the SSQ scores before and after the intervention.
2. The issue of prayer has been explained in the description of the LWs work. This concern was raised by the first reviewer as well and has been commented on in the first reviewer's response. Prayer is traditionally part of the activities carried out by LWs in this 98% Christian community. Please see method and discussion.
3. Patients were selected on the basis of their SSQ scores. Table 4 showing the referral sources indicates the proportion of participants from the different sources.

Minor Compulsory revision
4. The peer support group was different from the weekly nurse group and the paper has been changed to reflect this.
5. Page 6 under characteristics of participants has been deleted completely and a new paragraph added in the 'background' to summarize findings of the first phase of the study.
6. Spelling mistake noted and corrected to read 'complementary'
7. Spelling mistake noted and corrected to read 'sight'
8. ST (Shirly Tshimanga) is mentioned in the acknowledgement section

We hope these changes will allow you to accept the paper and thank-you for your consideration

Yours truly

Dickson Chibanda