Reviewer's report

Title: Pilot Evaluation of the text4baby mobile health program

Version: 5 Date: 26 September 2012

Reviewer: Gregory Norman

Reviewer's report:

The paper presents an evaluation of the text4baby program with underserved pregnant women in Fairfax County Virginia. 123 women were randomized to treatment or control conditions. A pre-post survey assessed attitudes and behaviors. Assessments were conducted on reactions to messages and effect of program on maternal pre-natal care and attitudes beliefs and behavioral outcomes. Follow-up occurred 2 to 3 months after the initial pre-natal visit with 90 women (73%).

Major Revisions

The strengths of this study include the evaluation of an intervention targeted at healthcare needs of an underserved population segment. The intervention is theory-based and scalable. Unfortunately, the study was significantly underpowered and there are many methodological concerns about the analysis and presentation of results (see below). The authors need to follow the CONSORT guidelines for RCTs. For example, a study flow diagram of the trial is not included in the paper. The conclusions that the program is “promising” are not supported by the study results.

Any information on reliability and validity on the developed questionnaire for attitudes and behaviors?

Target sample size was 260 but only 123 participants were recruited. The study was significantly underpowered.

The missing completely at random assumption is not verifiable. Why was a missing data imputation procedure used?

Information in table 2 should be presented stratified by treatment and control group.

It is not clear what the row headings mean in table 3.

Eight outcomes are tested without any adjustment to the type 1 error rate.

Minor Revisions:

What was the rational for including education status an effect modifier of the intervention? Was this an a priori decision?
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests