Author's response to reviews

Title: Developing Community-based Preventive Interventions in Hong Kong: A Description of the First Phase of the Family Project

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Version: 6 Date: 5 December 2011

Author's response to reviews:

December 5, 2011

Dear Dr. Thomson,

Re: MS: 1808541085529703 'Developing Community-based Preventive Interventions in Hong Kong: A Description of the First Phase of the Family Project' - revision

Thank you for your e-mail and for the reviewer's comments. Below you will find our point-by-point address of each comment provided. Our response appears in italics. Where we refer to specific content in the revised manuscript, we have provided a page number and changed the font color to red to facilitate quick location.

Reviewer comment:

This paper is confusing. The authors have endeavoured to respond in detail to the referees comments but the required clarifications have lengthened the paper to the point of it becoming unfocused. On the one hand this has improved the clarity of specific parts of the paper but the paper has now become very long and the purpose of the paper is now unclear somewhat confused. It seems that the authors are trying to report too many things in one paper:

1) development of a culturally appropriate intervention;
2) development of appropriate outcome measures;
3) development of a feasible and rigorous study design for a large scale evaluation;
4) piloting of the intervention;
5) piloting of the evaluation;
6) some limited results of the piloting regarding acceptability of the new intervention.
The paper is of interest but would be far less confusing, and shorter if it focused on the first two of these items. The issue of the RCT pilot mentioned in the abstract is a red herring and is a very minor part of the paper. The authors mention that full results of the pilot will be reported in due course. I suggest that reporting of the implementation of the pilot and the results is reserved for a separate paper and that this paper narrows its focus to the approach used to develop a culturally appropriate intervention and also culturally appropriate outcome measures to evaluate the acceptability and impact of the intervention developed, the authors may want also to outline the planned pilot but I think details of how the pilot was conducted might be better reported alongside the results of the pilot. So the aim of the paper is to report on a project which developed a culturally appropriate intervention with similarly culturally appropriate outcome measures for evaluation.

Author response:
We have now explicitly focused our paper on the first two points outlined above (see first line of the abstract, fourth line of Background, and p. 23), and deemphasized the RCTs that formed the pilot and their results, indicating on p. 21 that they will be reported in future publications. We have retained the discussion of issues relevant to community partner collaboration as such collaborations are particularly relevant to developing culturally appropriate and feasible programs in nonwestern cultures (p.4, p.7, p. 21, p. 22, and end of final paragraph on p. 23). Therefore, this component of the paper is subsumed under point 1.

Reviewer comment:
Related to the above recommendation general confusion- I have a comment. The section on Measurement is not very clear. Following the paragraph on primary outcomes there are three pages of text describing items. This could be reduced and clarified- is this text being used to describe how additional outcomes (additional to the primary outcomes) were selected and a way to measure them was devised? Was this done during the initial work to develop the intervention? In which case it may be better to report the development of the outcomes before the description of the piloting.

Author response:
The section on measurement has been changed as follows. It is shorter partly because the description of how the behavioral outcomes targeted in the interventions were selected was moved to the Results section (p. 14) where we believe it belongs. The behaviors that emerged during discussion groups as being common among Hong Kong parents and falling into warm and harsh parenting categories provided a pool for behaviors to target in the interventions and measure as primary outcomes (indicated on p. 14, and top of p. 19). The Measurement section has also been reorganized in a more logical manner. We have first described the challenges of measurement in this sample (p. 18), and then we have described the measurement of the outcomes. We first discuss the
primary outcomes (targeted behaviors) (p. 19), followed by the secondary outcomes of health, happiness and harmony (p. 20), and finally measures labeled as program evaluation outcomes (p. 20).

Reviewer comment:
Please add a title to Figure 1 and 2

Author response:
Figure 1 is now labeled as “Intergenerational connection and promotion of health, happiness, and harmony”. Figure 2 is now labeled as “Roles and transitions in the family life cycle”. Figure captions now appear on p. 32.

We thank you and the reviewer for your contributions to improving our manuscript, and look forward to hearing your response.

Sunita Stewart, PhD