Reviewer's report

Title: Community based needs assessment in an urban area; A participatory action research

Version: 3 Date: 4 November 2011

Reviewer: Barbara L Dancy

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The primary and secondary purposes are stated in the ‘Results’ section. On page 5, there is an indication of the purpose, but the purpose should be clearly stated before the “Methods” section. Pages 3-5 are not coherently organized and don’t provide sufficient rationale for determining the community health assessment. What is the significance of the community health assessment? Why is the historical perspective included? What does the historical perspective offer in terms of laying the foundation for the purpose?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The PAR is the methodology used to conduct the community health assessment. The steps of the PAR are delineated in the ‘Methods” section. The description of the steps is a strength. It would have been helpful to provide information on the numerous difficulties encountered in conducting the PAR. How many people attended the focus group workshops for two months? What were the retention rates for the focus group workshops? How many people participated in the development of the questionnaire? The authors reported that “after 14 days” the questionnaire administration was repeated to check reliability. This sounds like test-retest reliability, but the authors reported a Cronbach alpha.

3. Are the data sound?

Mixed model was introduced in the “Method of Data Analysis”. Provide more information on mixed model. The discussion of the data analysis lack sufficient detail; it seems that descriptive statistics were used, but this was not stated in this section. How was it decided that only five main problems would be identified? The discussion of the application of weights to the problems was confusing. The “Results” section continues to be poorly organized; it is not clear if the primary and secondary purposes were achieved. Research questions for each purpose would help in the organization of the results. What are the demographic characteristics of the 600 people? It is not clear how the five leading priorities in Table 1 are related to the 22 problems in Tables 2 and 3.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

No

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported
by the data?

The "Discussion" section is superficial and doesn’t adequately cover the lessons learned in conducting PAR, the types of barriers that need to be overcome, how the authors overcame the barriers, etc.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   No

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   The writing is much improved, but there is still awkward sentence structure throughout the manuscript. A person whose first language is English needs to edit this manuscript.

   All comments fall within the Major Compulsory revisions category.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.'