Author’s response to reviews

Title: Evidence-informed recommendations for constructing and disseminating messages supplementing the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
November 5, 2012

Dear Dr. Cullen,

Please find attached an electronic copy of the revised manuscript “Evidence-informed recommendations for constructing and disseminating messages supplementing the new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.” All requested revisions are described point-by-point below and are highlighted within the manuscript in yellow.

In the notification e-mail there was an editorial note requesting that we indicate that consent was obtained from all participants. We have not added a statement to address this request because as indicated in previous correspondence, the evaluation component reported in the paper does not fall within the scope of research ethics review. The explanation for this is provided below and is indicated within the manuscript.

Should you require any additional information regarding this manuscript, please contact me by e-mail amy.latimer@queensu.ca or by phone (613)533-6000 ext. 78773. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

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“As we now note in the methods section of the paper, the recommendation development process described in the submitted manuscript does not fall within the scope of research ethics review. Please refer below to Articles 2.4 and 2.5 from the Tri-Council Policy Statement relevant to the project described in the manuscript.

**Article 2.4** REB review is not required for research that relies exclusively on secondary use of anonymous information, or anonymous human biological materials, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information.

**Article 2.5** Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review.”

Reviewer #1 Comments:

1. **The context, paragraph 1 (page 6):** the sentence at the bottom of the page starting “To address this need, we undertook a two-phase process...” seems to be the research question. However, it seems overall a little vague and needs to be more clearly defined as a two-step research question, so that the reader gets a clear sign post as to what the paper will offer.
   p. 6 - A line has been added stating, “In phase 1, a systematic process was used to review the relevant literature. In Phase 2, an expert panel convene to develop the practical recommendations for the constructing supplementary messages to the CPAG.”

2. **Phase 1 literature review (page 7)** – this whole section could be written more succinctly and the findings synthesised to reduce the word count. If Latimer and colleagues echoed the findings of Rhodes and Pfaffi, then this could be combined and the two paragraphs written more concisely. Just a suggestion as the methods is very long and you lose the reader, so you need to be really succinct in the lit review and background rationale. ("Minor issue not for publication").
   p. 6 - The summary of Phase 1 has been shortened considerably. Key conclusions from each review are presented as bullet points.

3. **Methods, paragraph one, sentence 2 (page 9)** - starting with “The two lead authors...recommendations”. This is a very long sentence, it should be made shorter. For example the next sentence “following this discussion we modified the tool by tailoring the item wording to suit our objectives” could be shorted to “Accordingly, we modified the tool by tailoring the item wording to suit our objectives” You do not need the mechanics of telling the reader ‘after the
You should try and remove specific descriptors of the logistics and/or process throughout the methods to get the writing a little tighter overall.

p. 7-8. Thank you for your suggestions, this section has been shortened. As much as possible we have deleted logistical information. However, some information regarding logistics remains (e.g., how the AGREE II tool was modified). As this information is necessary to ensure the process is fully transparent.

4. Overall I found the write up for each of the Domains to be quite lengthy and at times a little clumsy. For example do you need to include the researchers initials involved each time? (page 10, 11 twice). Perhaps those could be excluded?

p. 7 – 14. Thank you for your comments. We have substantially edited the description of the Domains to be more clear and concise without losing the detail necessary to cover the AGREE II domains. Researchers’ initials have been removed and, where applicable, a more active voice has been used.

5. On page 10 the objectives and practical questions are included in text and then again in a Table. Could the reader just be directed to a Table? In addition, use of the active voice may allow for shorter sentences and greater clarity throughout the methods. "Minor issues not for publication

The objectives and practical questions are no longer included in the text. The reader is now referred to Additional File 1 - Table 7.

6. Discussion, para 1 sentence 2: you only refer to one other campaign VERB which is a campaign designed for tweens in the US. Is there any other existing evidence you drew from that should be mentioned here to illustrate across the life course not just the VERB? You do use the plural in and suggest it was ‘an accumulation of best practices’ do you need to include any other examples here to highlight this?

p. 16 – An additional campaign example has been added, the line now reads, “guidelines. Given that we drew from existing evidence of effective messaging interventions (e.g., VERB, ParticipACTION”).

7. There is also no discussion of message dissemination using new technologies, under Domain 3 or the discussion which may be an oversight but is worth mentioning. VERB and ParticiPACTION (the recent suite of media) did use new technologies to disseminate messages, so there are some examples in the literature. In view of the fact new technologies are becoming very influential in message construction and dissemination this may be important to highlight in view of future practice considerations in the Discussion.

Table 1 & p. 17. The use of technology is highlighted within the recommendations for messages accompanying the physical activity guidelines for youth. As a limitation of the process, we note the absence of an expert with knowledge of effective practices in the application of technology within the domain of health communication.

8. I note one reference in the page 32 Table 6 Plotnikoff RC., Bauman A., McGarger L et al should in fact be Berry T., Spence before Plotnikoff et al this needs to be corrected. "Minor issues not for publication".
Thank you for your careful review, this error has been corrected.

9. Page 31 – Table 5 – Key references there are some font changes in the references for Berry et al and Rhodes et al that may need to be checked. (Or it just might be the version I have downloaded) "Minor issues not for publication".
   Thank you for your careful review of this table, the error has been corrected.

10. The writing could be more succinct throughout the methods. However, this is a difficult article to write as it has 6 AGREE domains to cover and there is a lot of descriptive ‘process’ and logistics in the methods section eg number of participants, number of expert reviewers, questions reviewed prior to group meetings. The methods are written comprehensively making it difficult to maintain the reader’s interest and at times the flow. Some further ruthless editing would certainly be beneficial to reduce the word count and some of the lengthy sentences throughout the methods section.
    p. 7-14. Thank you for your comments. We have substantially edited the description of the Domains to be more clear and concise without losing the detail necessary to cover the AGREE II domains. We have shortened the paper by 3 pages.

11. Background (page 5) paragraph 3. The sentence beginning’ In 2011 and 2012…’ – needs to be a new paragraph.
    In revising the manuscript, this section has been removed entirely.

12. Background para 3 - The two sentences starting “This case study represents an important first step…. This model has…..uptake and implementation”. Seem to be out of place in the Introduction and may be better placed in the Discussion.
    This section has been removed.

13. Page 13 sentence 2 could be re-written eg “The consultations and survey were completed by the PHAC just prior to the meeting”. The active voice could be used to eg. Page 15 “Following the meeting a summary document was produced including recommendations and a description of the evidence based rationale for each recommendation”. Again it is my view you do not need to state that’ student delegates reviewed their notes’ the mechanics of the process seems to be superfluous for an academic paper. "Minor issues not for publication".
    p. 11-12 – These two sentences have been re-phrased using the reviewer’s recommended phrasing.

Reviewer #2 Comments:

1. A minor revision or discretionary revision I would suggest is to repeat in the text in a few place the references for the systematic reviews that the author refers to. Specifically, in AGREE Domain 3: Rigor of Development. The authors refer to systematic reviews already available, which I presumed to be citations 17, 19, 19, 21, etc. but it would be helpful to have those citation numbers repeated. Also, the authors mention in this section, that "additional review articles were identified."
would just ask the authors to consider whether any of these were key articles that should be cited?

p. 9 – These references have been added to the text.

2. A second discretionary revision would be to mention that to produce inspirational messages that are motivating and will break through the abundance of information and advertising that is assaulting us daily, public health planners and practitioners should use marketing experts to help design the visuals, graphics, and copy that is the final product. A sentence or two could be added in the second paragraph of the Discussion, acknowledging that evidence-based messages are a critical starting point, but what is often needed is marketing muscle to get the message to penetrate into the target audience. Granted, public health often does not have the resources to do this, but we should be giving attention to this deficit.

p. 17 – A line has been added to the discussion stating, “Indeed, including marketing experts would not only aid in helping to reach the target audience but also help to design the visuals, graphics and the copy of the final guidelines.”

3. This is an observation, perhaps no revision is needed. But as I was reviewing the supplemental files or Appendixes, I noted that the Key References that accompany the appendix do not match those that are mentioned in the Appendix text. The references do match those that were given in the manuscript itself. However, the material in the Appendixes is attached to the manuscript itself and no specific citations are given, so this may be a moot point. If the publisher is planning to publish the appendixes as separate files, perhaps an explanation to the reader is needed that they can find the references as given in the appendix in the main manuscript reference list.

A very astute observation! We have revised the reference list for each Additional File so that the in-text citations correspond with the individual reference list at the end of the file. We have added a note at the top of each file providing this instruction.