Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Justine Leavy

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Ms Justine Leavy BSc, MPH
Lecturer, Health Promotion
Curtin University, Western Australia
Australia

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

Authors:
Latimer-Cheung, A. E.,
Rhodes, R. E.,
Kho, M.E.,
Tomasone, J. R.,
Gainforth, H.L.,
Kowalski, K.,
Nasuti, G.,
Perrier, M. J.,
Duggan, M.
The Canadian Physical Activity Guideline Messaging Recommendation Workgroup.

Overall
This is an important and timely contribution to evidence based decision making in the physical activity literature, which clearly noted by the authors is lacking. However, the accompanying narrative in the Methods section is lengthy and at times the amount of detail is over whelming. With some further rigorous editing to reduce the wordiness and maintain the reader’s interest this is an appropriate article for health promotion practitioners and those who design and deliver physical activity messages. I trust my comments are useful as this is a welcome addition to the literature.
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

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.

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 Pfaeffi, 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 ("Minor issue not for publication").

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

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 discussion’. You should try and remove specific descriptors of the logistics and/or process throughout the methods to get the writing a little tighter overall.

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? 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"

3. Are the data sound?

Yes.

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

Yes this is not a typical manuscript in terms of data analysis and reporting but the authors have adhered to research standards.

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

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?

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.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes throughout the manuscript several limitations are noted together with a dedicated section in the Discussion.

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

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"

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes, it is well thought out, appropriate and conveys what has been found.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
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.

Background (page 5) paragraph 3. The sentence beginning’ In 2011 and 2012…’ – needs to be a new paragraph.

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.

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"

10. Are the included additional files (supplementary materials) appropriate?
Yes. Some of this material could be used to reduce the word count more efficiently see suggestion above under point 2.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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