Reviewer's report

Title: A pilot study comparing two weight loss maintenance interventions among low-income, mid-life women

Version: 1 Date: 13 March 2013

Reviewer: Perry Foley

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:
None

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Is the second definition of weight loss maintenance inclusive of a 3% change? Sometimes the manuscript says < 3% (not including 3%), sometimes it says ± 3% (which does include 3%). The criterion should be consistent throughout the manuscript.

2. Did all participants who were eligible to participate in the maintenance phase based on weight loss agree to participate (or was the maintenance intervention built into the original study design and informed consent)? If not, how many refused and what were their reasons for refusal (can also put this under Results)?

3. Figure 1: the right arm of the flow chart (Face-to-Face only) should read “2 individual + 10 group”, as there was no phone contact in this group.

4. Figure 1: the figure should include 6-month assessment numbers since 6-month outcomes are reported.

5. Methods: This section mentions that the primary focus of this pilot work was feasibility and acceptability, which seems discordant with the primary outcome of weight maintenance. Feasibility and acceptability seem to be strong secondary outcomes of interest.

6. Methods: Who is the health counselor in the maintenance phase? Is this the same counselor as in the weight loss phase?

7. Methods: The authors describe several topics included in the weight maintenance skills training (problem solving, stress management, etc.). Were these same topics covered at all in the weight loss intervention? If so, how was the overlap handled?

8. Methods: The authors mention food records – what other tools were used for self-monitoring, if any?

9. Results: Table 1: The Table and the Results text indicate an n of 51 for the 12-month outcomes, but Figure 1 indicates an n of 50 (34+16).

10. Results: Why did 7 women not complete their 6- or 12-month assessments? Did they become ineligible or were they lost to follow-up?
11. Results: This section would be strengthened by a report of the number of participants that met both criteria for weight maintenance – are the 24 women who maintained the 5% weight loss and the 25 women whose weight changed less than 3% a very similar group of women?

12. Results: When was program satisfaction assessed - at 12 months?

13. The authors may want to include a more thorough discussion of the various modalities included in this pilot weight maintenance intervention – particularly given the characteristics of the WW participant population. What are the advantages/disadvantages of phone vs. in-person and what are the implications for dissemination? What would be next steps in terms of thinking about the number and types of contacts necessary to produce the desired weight maintenance in a RCT?

Discretionary Revisions:

1. The abstract Methods section may want to mention that the primary weight-loss intervention was conducted among low-income midlife women (to tie back to the abstract Background).

2. The Background could benefit from a brief discussion of how SES relates to risk with respect to obesity.

3. Methods: This section would be strengthened from a breakdown of intervention contact time in hours (as is done in the Discussion). While the number of contacts is the same, the authors point out in the Discussion that the total contact time in hours is nearly doubled in the Face-to-Face only group.

4. The Discussion (and/or Results) might benefit from more specific data regarding attendance at the group sessions and adherence to the counseling calls.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.