Reviewer's report

Title: Are practitioner-based programs effective in improving physical activity?: Evaluation of GoGirlsGo!

Version: 1 Date: 31 October 2013

Reviewer: Kirsten Corder

Reviewer's report:

Review of Huberty et al. BMC Public Health

I commend the authors for undertaking the evaluation of an on-going after school programme. The paper is well written and contains some very interesting and detailed information regarding the “GoGirlGo!” (GGG) programme. This type of research is very important and has many challenges to rigorous scientific evaluation. However, the paper could benefit from clarification of some apparent inconsistencies and some more information regarding some elements of the study.

Major revisions

1. It would be helpful to state in the abstract and throughout where relevant that although this study did aim to evaluation the effectiveness of the programme, it was not an RCT so has some limitations regarding drawing conclusions regarding effectiveness. It would seem more appropriate for this paper to describe a pilot evaluation, rather than a full evaluation as it is not an RCT and has quite a small sample.

2. It would be helpful to provide more information about how girls were recruited in the methods section? Were all girls in a school invited? How many invited vs. recruited? It would be helpful to state numbers of participants in the methods section. Currently, the limitations section is the first mention of participant numbers

3. It would also be helpful to provide information about how many girls attended sessions compared to the intended dose. Also, how many of the sessions were run compared to the amount intended?

4. More information about processing of AG data is important? Was any non-wear time removed? What intensity cut points were used? What was main outcome?

5. More information about the derivation of self-efficacy and enjoyment measures would be appropriate.

6. It is a bit disappointing that an intended 30 minute PA session only lead to 1.5 min increase in 11+ year-olds but surprising that this difference was statistically significant. More information is needed on the statistics section and especially
the mixed effects models. Very small differences seem to be significant in a very small sample.

7. The authors state that GGG was implemented for one or two days a week – how many was it meant to be implemented for and how many was it implemented for across all settings.

8. Figures 2 and 3 appear to have wrong scales e.g. the 1.5 minutes bar for 11+ is at nearly 8 minutes for example and the same goes for the other bars.

Minor revisions

9. The authors state that this programme is widely disseminated – how widely is this disseminated, can the authors provide numbers of settings currently using this programme. The reach is stated as 1,000,000 girls but some more information about current programme use would be helpful.

10. Can the authors clarify whether the nine ASPS from the Midwest piloting this were using this programme before the evaluation?

11. It would be helpful to clarify the timeline for both the study (e.g evaluation) vs. GGG (the programme itself). When the authors refer to the study being Aug 12 – Dec 12 was this the GGG or the evaluation ‘study’, this section isn’t particularly clear.

12. The authors describe the training for the staff running this programme - is training also given when used in the community (not in a research study)?

13. Who ran the programme, was it school teacher? PE teachers? Or other staff members?

14. How many girls attended an ASP for at least 60 minutes each day? Was this assessed for every session or was this derived for only the measured session, more information about this would be helpful?

15. Was only one fidelity check completed per setting? Did the setting know that the evaluators were coming? This could have influenced the quality of the programme on that day. Do you have information on how many sessions were run out of those intended?

16. Were session topics and speakers provided to the settings? Were the settings responsible for organising these themselves? Were they given any resources to help them?

17. The authors controlled for the time in attendance – how was this measured?

18. In the fidelity section it would be helpful to have more information about the measure of ‘girls responding well’.

19. Table 5 - was this the ‘% of curriculum implemented’ estimated from the one observation per setting viewed or was this in total over the intervention period.
20. Table 3 How can total time in attendance have been measured at baseline if the program wasn’t yet running? This isn’t clear.

Discretionary revisions

21. It would be appropriate to state which IRB approved it.

22. More detail about how demographics and BMI were assessed would be helpful.

23. In the discussion, the authors state ‘At a few of the sites’ – precise numbers would be more appropriate if possible.

24. Scrapbook and journals don’t appear to be mentioned until the end of the fidelity section.

25. The authors say that the programme suited older children better, but there was less PA difference for the older children – this could be seen as contradictory.

26. The authors state that the programme could have an impact on emotional health and that principles of enjoyment are included – however enjoyment only seems to change at follow-up. Some more explanation about this would be helpful.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests