Reviewer’s report

Title: The influence of social networks on self-management support: a metasynthesis

Version: 1 Date: 2 June 2014

Reviewer: Elizabeth Beverly

Reviewer’s report:

I commend the authors on a well-written and well-researched qualitative metasynthesis. This manuscript addresses an important topic that requires more research in the future. The identification of gaps in the literature may inspire future research in this area.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Methods: The Analysis section should include a few sentences on “Rigor” or “Efforts to Ensure Quality.” While I believe the authors followed “Efforts to Ensure Quality” or “Rigor,” one to two sentences explicitly stating how the authors ensured rigor would strengthen the analysis section. For example, the authors could address triangulation, audit trails, an external audit, etc.

2. Conclusions: The findings from this study, as with all analyses of qualitative research, are exploratory and should be considered hypotheses. The authors presented their hypotheses/ findings, next they should discuss in greater detail what future research is needed to confirm the hypotheses/findings presented in the manuscript (e.g., more detail is needed than simply mentioning that interventions should be designed to maximize possibilities for social engagement). For example, what should interventionists include in quantitative study designs? Further, the findings in the metasynthesis may be too preliminary to have any impact on policy. The authors should be careful not to reach beyond the scope of their data. Perhaps toning down the language on page 18, paragraph 2 to say that “Our findings may have implications for policy development...” is more appropriate.

3. Conclusions: The authors should address the strengths and limitations of reviewing qualitative research on the influence of social networks on self-management support. This metasynthesis is novel and extremely important! The authors should highlight this fact. In addition, the authors should address limitations that are associated with qualitative research (e.g., researcher bias in data interpretation, selection bias, social desirability bias, homogenous samples, small sample sizes, cross-sectional designs, generalizability concerns, etc.)

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. The authors should change ‘type II diabetes’ to ‘type 2 diabetes’ throughout the manuscript. The nomenclature in diabetes research has changed and should
now be referred to as type 2 diabetes in the literature.

2. Title: The authors should consider revising the title to more accurately reflect the review of the literature: “The influence of social networks on type 2 diabetes self-management support: a qualitative metasynthesis.”

3. Introduction/Methods: Given that this metasynthesis focuses on qualitative research on type 2 diabetes self-management support, the authors may want to consider moving paragraph 2 on page 5 to the Introduction section. Stating in the Introduction section that the review focuses on type 2 diabetes self-management (either before or after the aim of the paper) would be extremely beneficial in improving the clarity and purpose of the review for the reader.

4. Methods: The review would benefit from a definition or operationalization of the term “social networks.” For example, an individual with type 2 diabetes may include his/her health care team as part of the social network, yet literature on the patient-provider relationship was not reviewed. Clarification of the term “social network” will strengthen the review.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. Results: The manuscript may benefit from the inclusion of quotations from the cited qualitative studies to support the researchers’ claims and illustrate the meaning of the three themes. The quotations could be included in a table (perhaps as an additional column in Table 1 or 2).

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

**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.