Reviewer's report

Title: Have young men been targeted to change risk behaviours? A scoping review of the literature.

Version: 2  Date: 29 April 2014

Reviewer: Georgie MacArthur

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The article presents the results of a broad scoping review of interventions targeting risk behaviours in young adult males (17-35 years), using the methodology of Arksey and O’Malley. The article addresses an important topic - the prevention of risk behaviours and the outcomes of these behaviours in young adults. However, I feel that the paper requires a number of revisions prior to publication, as outlined below.

Major compulsory revisions

Background

1. Overall, a stronger and more concise case needs to be made at the beginning of the article explaining why there is a need to map studies targeting young men in particular.

2. In the first paragraph of the introduction, the authors describe the effect of mass media health campaigns. It might be more balanced to include mention of additional types of intervention, including individual, group, and population level interventions.

3. I think the beginning section could be a little more ordered with information given, for instance, by prevalence of the risk behaviour, so that obesity / alcohol / tobacco use are discussed first, followed by the less prevalent behaviours e.g. gambling etc. It would also be helpful for the reader if this section were cut a little for clarity.

4. At the end of the fourth paragraph (line 78-79), I would caution against describing alcohol consumption as an initiator of risk as it is a risk behaviour in its own right, as well as being associated with other behaviours.

5. It’s not clear why the precede-proceed model in particular is discussed – and how it is relevant to the aim of the study.

6. A greater justification is needed as to why the authors have chosen a scoping review.

Methods

1. The authors should justify why the particular methodological framework was used and provide a brief outline of the framework/ steps involved.

2. I don’t see why research from lower and middle-income countries was excluded and don’t agree with the rationale here. However, I see that it would be
unfeasible to re-assess the titles/abstracts at this stage.

3. In the ‘interventions’ section, it would be helpful if the authors could state more clearly if ‘promote healthy behaviour’ is specific to those behaviours listed.

4. Also, did the authors also aim to include studies that addressed >1 behaviour? If so, this needs to be stated.

5. The authors state that only one author screened the titles and abstracts, made the decision regarding inclusion of full texts, and extracted data. I see that a very large number of abstracts were retrieved, but at least a 10% sample of abstracts and full texts should be assessed by a second reviewer to check agreement.

Results

1. The figures presented for percentage of studies appear to be a little confusing – shouldn’t this be % of studies (total 100) rather than % of assessments of risk behaviours (total 112), as currently presented?

2. Lines 245 onwards, this data may be more clearly presented in a table.

3. It would be helpful for the authors to add ‘n’ and ‘%’ to the end of the tables. Please also check numbers, I count a different total e.g. for interventions which are face-to-face or in university/college settings?

Discussion

1. The aim at the beginning of the discussion does not match the title and aim stated in the abstract, regarding the interventions included. The text in lines 381 to 386 is also a little confusing-both groups seem to be the studies targeting young men, but is one of these the group where outcomes were stratified? It would be helpful if there were greater clarity here.

2. The authors do not discuss the findings regarding balance or nature of interventions identified in relation to prevalence of the risk behaviours in young men or in relation to DALYs/YLLs. They could also consider how the data obtained compare to what is already known about such interventions for young adults/older adults/young women. Inclusion of the former points may better link the discussion with the introduction and would provide context to the findings.

Minor issues

1. Line 116 regarding motivations of older vs younger adults is a bold statement. I recommend changing this to ‘may be’ more motivated as this will clearly not always be the case.

2. Line 275 should read ‘it is clear that the interventions targeting alcohol use were ….’

3. Line 394 should read ‘Few interventions…’

4. I would exclude lines 400 to 403 in the discussion regarding the working styles of males and females.

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