Reviewer's report

Title: PRISM (Program of Resources Information and Support for Mothers): a community randomised trial to reduce depression and improve women’s physical health six months after birth [ISRCTNO3464021]

Version: 1 Date: 27 October 2005

Reviewer: Susan Watt

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript, which is clear and crisply written, details a randomized trial to improve maternal health. The publication is important as it add to a series of studies in which interventions have not produced significant changes in mental or physical health outcomes in this population. It also adds to the important literature containing “non-significant” trial outcomes.

The data appears to be sound, well presented, and clear. The tables are informative and presented in standard convention.

The title and abstract are acceptable reflections of the content of the article.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Two content revisions are, in my opinion, necessary to ensure the usefulness of this article to a wide audience. They need not belabor either point, but should be addressed.

1. What was/were the reason(s) that the researchers thought that the intervention would make any difference in these outcomes? Is there other evidence about the efficacy of this intervention? Particularly, what is the evidence that led to trying a community intervention? I believe that these thoughts, and the supporting literature, need to be spelled out in the Background for those who are not familiar with the other trials.

2. In the Discussion a number of issues about changes in the community are proposed as possible explanations for the lack of effectiveness of the community-based intervention. The proposal that the intervention, in and of itself, regardless of setting, is not effective in producing better outcomes needs exploration. As it is currently presented, it looks as if the researchers have only considered the circumstances or contexts of the intervention rather than the intrinsic efficacy of the intervention, in evaluating the outcomes. To leave the article at that level, would be, in my opinion, a major shortcoming.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

None

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

None
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests