Reviewer's report

Title: Identifying Strategies to Improve Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study

Version: 1 Date: 7 February 2006

Reviewer: Louise Forsetlund

Reviewer's report:

General

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The question posed is not entirely new, but previous publication on the topic, particularly in the public health field, is limited. The question is well defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The methods used are individual and group interviews and with some reservations, I consider these methods to be appropriate. It is not as straightforward as it may seem to ask practitioners of their needs, as needs sometimes tend to be unrecognised. Also regarding the second aim: “identification of typical information seeking behaviours”, the best method would have been to observe the actual behaviour. However, asking participants about needs and how they seek their information is not uncommon.

Discretionary Revisions:

It would be suitable to declare the background and point of departure of the “project’s qualitative research consultant”, as well as those participating in developing the interview guide and in the data analysis. In addition, it might be appropriate to state in a few words the profession of the public health practitioners in this study, e.g. were they all physicians?

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Major Compulsory Revisions:

One does get the impression that the data must have been sound and that they were well controlled. Also, the description of the analysis really gives a thorough impression. However, the data in a qualitative study being the participants’ textual responses to questions; I wonder why there is not one quote from the participants exemplifying, warranting, illustrating, or documenting the categories? I would at least like to see the reasons for this.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Major Compulsory Revisions:

In the Background chapter it is stated that the study has three objectives. However, I cannot find a report on the second aim in the Result chapter (identification of typical information seeking behaviours). In stead, some of these results seem to have ended up in the Discussion chapter? If
self-reported information seeking behaviour really was one of the aims, it must be reported on.

Minor Essential Revisions:
In addition, I suggest that the interview script, both for individual interviews and focus groups are attached.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion, the limitations mentioned and conclusions seem quite appropriate, but as mentioned above I do wonder whether not some of the points raised in this chapter, really belong to the Result chapter.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Major Compulsory Revisions:
Yes, except from as previously stated: a report on what was current practices is missing.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Discretionary Revisions: Yes, it is generally fine, but please check up on some long sentences and see if they can be shortened!

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.