Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 15 February 2006

Reviewer: Johanna I Westbrook

Reviewer's report:

General

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

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

This is a very well written and engaging paper about the information needs of public health professionals. The paper effectively builds upon previous work and presents useful information for those seeking to improve information strategies for this diverse group of health professionals. Very unusually I find that this paper requires very few changes in order to enhance it.

The authors could consider making reference in the discussion (page 22) to some of the other specialized professional health databases that present summaries of synthesized evidence such as PeDro in physiotherapy and OT Seeker for occupational therapists. See eg Australian occupational therapists’ use of an online evidence-based practice database (OTseeker) Kryss McKenna*1, Sally Bennett*1, Zoe Dierselhuis*†, Tammy Hoffmann*1, Leigh Tooth‡1 & Annie McCluskey§1,

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Moseley AM, Herbert RD, Sherrington

Also on page 23 the authors discuss the difficulty of providing access to a great number of full-text journals by a large PH population yet there are examples of this. For example in Australia, The Clinical Information Access Program (CIAP) provides over 55,000 clinicians in the public health workforce with access to in excess of 400 such publications. We have undertaken an extensive evaluation of this system which includes examining how availability of such information may influence practices. This work may be of interest here. Also other states in Australia have similar systems, such as the Clinicians Health Channel in Victoria. Governments are able to negotiate
reasonable cost licenses for very large populations. See for example


What next?: Accept after discretionary 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 I have not competing interests