Reviewer's report

Title: Program of active aging in a rural Mexican community: a qualitative approach

Version: 1 Date: 10 April 2007

Reviewer: Cynthia Teel

Reviewer's report:

General

Identifying factors that empower older adults is essential to building a healthy community that takes advantage of the contributions of all of its members. In this study, the authors report having provided an educational program about active aging to older adults in a rural community in Mexico. The authors report that participants were more empowered, creative, and self-fulfilled following participation in the educational program. Of particular interest is the authors' suggestion that the training provides opportunities for social and emotional change.

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

The Gerontological care model (Figure 1) needs to be revised to account for the relationship between the Gerontological health care unit and training of the gerontological promotors. From the description in the text, the Unit guides the Training, but this is not represented in the Figure. The other point that needs clarification is the use of the terms "control" for healthy and ill elderly care needs, and "enforcement" of self-care that is described in the Figure legend. These terms seem counterintuitive in a model that purportedly supports empowerment and self-care. From the text description, it's also unclear why there are 2 GN for each of the 4 program objectives in the model, and how the GN contribute to the desired outcomes.

The study intervention consisted of a 14-week educational program. The program description is too limited, and should include more detail about what information was provided, and the circumstances of the educational sessions. There were 155 participants, but how the program was provided for these participants is not identified.

Overall, the methods and analytic strategies used in this project require more clarification. For example, one of the key findings is that participants began to "organize among them and start integrating groups", but no supporting evidence is provided to justify or explain this finding. This same issue is encountered throughout the methods and results sections. The conclusions require more supporting data and explanation.

The authors indicate that a "qualitative analysis" of various data sources led to specific conclusions (pg. 10). These explanations and links between the data and the interpretation need to be made clear.

The report should include other available data related to descriptions of the participants, such as, participation rates in the educational sessions, retention rates (100 out of 155), explanation of drop-out, what is meant by "functioning as paraprofessional gerontologists", and the outreach activities to neighboring communities following completion of the program. It's unclear what the process was for the 100 program completers to extend their sphere of influence to 500 older adults in other communities.

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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)

Several grammatical errors need to be corrected. For example, in the abstract section for methods (last sentence, i.e., ...for measure the) and conclusion (first sentence, i.e., ...for reach the), "for" is used instead of the correct "to".

In the Background section, the authors use the phrase 4 key elements, yet the elements appear to be beliefs of the authors, so it would be more correct to identify these as beliefs that provide the framework for the study. These beliefs must be linked to and explained in the context of the Gerontological care model (Figure 1) that is presented as a model for the study.
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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.