Reviewer's report

Title: Effective Elements of School Health Promotion Across Behavioral Domains: A Systematic Review of Reviews

Version: 1 Date: 5 February 2009

Reviewer: Katja Joronen

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

-Data extraction (p. 7): Please explain the origin of the standardized form used in the review. Is it retrieved from somewhere? Developed (by whom?) ad hoc for this review? Could you cite someone here?

-Quality rating (p.8): Please mention that this tool is recommended by Cochrane Handbook http://www.cochrane-handbook.org/ (Part 3: Special topics / Chapter 21: Reviews in public health and health promotion / 21.4 Assessment of study quality and risk of bias

-Analysis (p.9): I think that this section is now too “fuzzy”. Appropriate references would make this chapter stronger. The sentence: In general, the results of reviews with higher quality and stricter criteria were weighed as more valid. is too vague. You could cite the quality scores here and define what do you mean when you say "as more valid". The statement that you make considerations of effectiveness irrespective of the quality rating is not well-founded.

-Results (p.11): Every fourth review was rated as low quality. In my opinion, these low quality reviews make this review of reviews weaker. If you read the tables, especially Table 2 where 13 reviews are lacking Methodological inclusion criteria, this weakness becomes visible, and the reader begins to suspect all the results. Despite your argumentation in the discussion I’d exclude the reviews without methodological inclusion criteria. Cochrane guidelines support the exclusion of low quality studies, too. What do you think?

-Discussion (pp.22-23): Could you make a difference between the elements (b,e,f,h,i) which are supported by high-quality reviews and a,c,d,g which are not so highly supported. The reader may read only the first paragraph of the Discussion and it can lead him/her astray.

-Limitations (p. 27): The statements: Although lower-quality reviews are less transparent, this does not necessarily mean that their results and conclusions are false. Etc. If you decide to keep the low-quality reviews, please find support to your statements from adequate references.

-Conclusions: This chapter is a repetition of your results. Please rewrite it – or maybe it could be presented as a summary illustration?
- The text is still a little loose. I think that you could sum up a little.

Minor Essential Revisions

- Introduction (last paragraph), p. 5: As Nation stated – which Nation? – Dutch government or United Nations?
- Methods (p. 6): You use terms sex and sexuality in the same paragraph. Is there a difference of contents in these programs? Could you use e.g. sexual behavior in both?
- Data extraction (p. 8): One author – could you specify? The first author?
- Analysis (p. 9): For program aspects that were not… is this not appropriate here?
- Results (p. 12, first paragraph): Please use statistical significant, and not only significant positive effects…(three times)
- Results (p. 21): Price regulation and minimum drinking age…effective. The quality is very low (2) in those reviews. Should you remind it here?
- The tables 2-8. I would align left the Titles of the first row (Reference, Behavior focus etc.) and the Title of the second row, e.g. Multiple behaviors

Discretionary Revisions

- Abstract (methods): Instead of assessor I’d use author.
- You are using the words vat/enormous several times in Introduction (pp. 4-5). Is this such a superlative topic?
- Results (p. 10): Please consider the term a fair share – is it relevant here?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests