Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluating Active U: An internet-mediated physical activity program

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Reviewer: Brenda BL Rooney

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript, and the research project was very well done. The large sample size makes the findings very strong. The lack of a randomized trial does not weaken the study in any way, since this study was conducted in a "real world" setting. The article was very thorough, and the analysis very strong. I was unfamiliar with ZIP regression analysis, but from how the authors describe it, it seems a very appropriate way to examine their data.

Minor Essential Revisions:

Its too bad that there is nothing known about those that didn't participate, other than gender. I don't recall the authors comparing participants to non-participants on gender. From the information in Table 1, there could be a statistical comparison of participant/nonparticipant and gender. If gender was available from some source, can you also get age, so a comparison can be made on age?

The authors do a nice job of speculating on the possibility that those more sedentary individuals may have been less likely to participate. How does this impact your study and conclusions? What can you offer for suggestions on how to recruit this higher risk population?

That only 1/3 of participants entered physical activity data for all eight weeks suggests a low participation rate to me. How does this compare to other physical activity programs? What can you offer for suggestions on how to improve this in future research/community-based projects?

The authors could describe in a bit more detail how the ZIP and Predicting Excess Zeros results differ and why they think this is so. More specifically, what is so different about those people that didn't enter any data?

I think Table 1 should be a figure - not a table.

Table 4 - results for BMI should be bolded to be consistent with other significant findings in that table (or none of them should be bolded.)

Figure 2 shows a percent entering data by team size, but in the manuscript, this is not really described. It really was difficult to tell what the point to Figure 2 was, since it came out very small on my copy, and I couldn't tell the difference between the lines. (All figures were difficult to read.)

The paper could be edited a bit. There was perhaps too much information in the abstract - regarding the ZIP regression model, and in the methods/measures
section - readers don't need to know the age categories, self-rated health - the categories are evident from the tables. I didn't know what "server load analysis" was until it was described in the results. Maybe this could be better defined in the methods.

Overall, a nice study and paper. This type of research needs to be published. It will help those of us in the field to better plan and design projects like this.

**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.