Reviewer's report

Title: Participant Recruitment and Retention in a Pilot Program to Prevent Weight Gain in Low-Income Overweight and Obese Mothers

Version: 2 Date: 6 April 2009

Reviewer: Rachael Taylor

Reviewer's report:

The article presents an analysis of what factors might affect recruitment and retention to interventions in a highly mobile, socially disadvantaged group. As the authors highlight, others have examined this in other populations, but little work exists in this particular sample (young mothers in WIC programmes). Specific comments as follows:

Major compulsory revisions

1. No indication is provided of the initial recruitment rate ie. page 5 says every woman was personally invited but the paper does not show how many women were invited and refused to participate and whether these non-participants differed in any way from participants.

2. Why did only 30% of participants complete 24-hour recalls - justify. Reference(s) to support the use of telephone administered recalls would also be an advantage - often when these are done, participants have already completed a face to face interview first.

3. The incentives mention pedometers yet the methods suggest only a questionnaire was used to measure physical activity - why the discrepancy?

4. How were the 12 participants for the focus groups recruited? Were all the women at completion asked and only 12 agreed to participate?

5. Appropriate stats should be added to Table 1 given that tables should contain all necessary information to interpret them.

6. Similarly it would be good to see the predictors information in a table with all P values shown.

7. Page 12, "as one improved in negative affect" - improved from what to what? No information is provided regarding at what time points this refers to.

8. Very little information is provided from the focus groups (page 12) - was any other information pertinent?

9. I am somewhat surprised by the comment that returning the first package is a condition of enrolment. Surely informed consent has to be obtained prior to this, so won't the non-returners still be considered drop-outs?

10. Given this was a pilot study, with a large drop-out, was it sufficiently powered to detect any factors of interest?

11. Number 6. I don't see how having an inclusion criterion of must be willing to
make 2 trips to be measured will actually change behaviour ie. attendance.

12. Can women be tracked from one WIC centre to another or is it not centrally managed?

Minor essential revisions:
13. Page 4, end of 2nd paragraph - remove "un" before documented.

Discretionary revisions
14. A brief explanation of positive and negative affect would be an advantage.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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