Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of web-based follow-up response in the Prevention of Low Back Pain the Military Trial

Version: 2 Date: 13 January 2011

Reviewer: Jerrilyn Cambron

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

This is an interesting article and I thank the authors for submitting it. However, the one major issue in electronic follow-up within this trial is the ability for the solder to access a computer. Is it possible for the authors to include and analyze information on location of the soldiers (even ‘within’ or ‘outside’ of the US) and/or ability to access a computer at their location during the follow-up? This seems to be the most critical factor in the results presented and much more relevant than variables such as income or BMI.

Minor essential revisions

The participants in this study were training to become combat medics. Because they were focused on the medical field, I would have expected them to have a higher response rate than soldiers in the non-medical field, just as doctors and nurses have higher response rates in cohort studies compared to subjects in the general population. How do the authors think this would be the case in this study?

I was a bit unclear as to the dichotomous outcome of 'whether a soldier responded to any one of the 12 monthly surveys.' It seems as though the authors included any response to one of three emails as a positive response but any response to a telephone call as a non-response. Is that correct? If so, please include information on how many responded at one email, two emails, three emails, and at the phone call. Because this manuscript deals with response rates and predictors of response rates, this information is important and interesting.

There are a few times in the manuscript and table where the variable for income is divided by <$20K and >$20K, but =$20K is not included.

It would be helpful to have the odds ratios for each variable included in Table 1, particularly because the authors use those data in the results section.

Discretionary revisions

None

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.