Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of an online interactive Diabetes Needs Assessment Tool (DNAT) for health professionals: Results of a randomised controlled trial

Version: 2 Date: 16 February 2011

Reviewer: Kitti Sranacharoenpong

Reviewer's report:

Comments:

This manuscript describes the evaluation of an online interactive Diabetes Needs Assessment Tool for health professionals. The results of this study are useful for next development and others to learn from the study’s experience. There are some areas where the manuscript could be strengthened as described in detail below. Currently, the focus is on knowledge changing as the central point of the paper. This is weakened by the fact that knowledge improvement in intervention and control groups are not significant difference. The researchers mention in discussion to implement this online tool for clinical practice and ultimate goal is to improve health status of target population.

Background:

1. Provide some description of the training/support that health professionals are already receiving.

2. Explain more details about “gaps in knowledge and skills” that you mentioned in page 5.

3. Can you explain about background, theoretical basis for the learning program both programs, Diabetes Learning Modules and Diabetes Needs Assessment Tool? What differences and similarities?

Methods:

1. Participant recruiting (n = 1286) and randomized steps, can you show how many Germany-speaking and English-speaking participants?

2. Can you reorganize the steps/ methods based on your figure 1? Where was the figure 1 in the manuscript? You should also mention “Figure 1” somewhere else.

3. Explain how the stratification was performed, and what was used to randomize participants to condition. Also, participants’ language was used to stratify the sample; should not participants be the unit of analysis? You also mentioned in the discussion (page 14, second paragraph) about bi-language aspect. This point might be useful to concern in future if other researchers would like to adapt this approach.
4. Course process: explain how online materials were delivered/ disseminated? How often? How to support for learning? How to motivate both groups of participants to learn?

5. Course process: address whether every participant in the intervention group was exposed to all pieces of the training and content, whether there choice was involved, and how assurance of training criteria was achieved (i.e., how was this monitored?).

Results:
1. Table 2, can you explain effect within group?
2. Check page 12, secondary outcomes showed Table 2 or Table 3? I could not find the number, 76.8% (218/284) in the table. Please double check.
3. Table 3: Clarify the findings (currently hard to follow), e.g.,
   3.1. What is (are) different and similar findings in both groups?
   3.2. Did you analyze correlation between CCA score improving and some variables in table 3 (e.g., the learning materials have improved my overall understanding of the management of diabetes, etc) of both groups?

Discussion and conclusions:
1. In general, the discussion lacks of focus of an online interactive Diabetes Needs Assessment Tools (DNAT) when comparing with Diabetes Learning Modules (DLM) alone. Please identify the most important points of discussion and place in the context of what is known in the literature and the results.
2. If the results shown no difference of knowledge improvement between DNAT and DLM, why you want to use DNAT for next phase?
3. What are strengthening of DNAT if the researchers want to use to change clinical practice?
4. In your opinion, do you think 4-month of learning and DNAT can change clinical practice? Is it too long or too short? What kinds of approaches and/or activities needed to support for health professionals?
5. Why did the study receive low response rate? Did you provide incentives? If not, how to motivate subjects to participate through the study in 4-month period?
6. Did you find any different results between two languages implementation?

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

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.

Kitti Sranacharoenpong, PhD
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