Reviewer's report

Title: Integrating an Internet-mediated walking program into Family Medicine clinical practice

Version: 1 Date: 22 January 2011

Reviewer: Nanette Mutrie

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Positives elements of the article:
1. The authors have demonstrated significant increases in walking using the Stepping up to Health (SUH) program, which should be commended given the benefits of walking for health that has been reported in previous research.
2. The authors have recorded both quantitative and qualitative data, which has allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of the program to be gained.
3. The program is based on an existing model of primary care that emphasise technological innovations and patient-centred preventative health programs which is can be delivered at population level (Patient-Centred Medical Home; PCMH).

Major compulsory revisions:
1. There is a lack of rationale from the authors concerning why they did not attempt a more robust design. A randomised-control trial was not used and this was stated as a limitation of the study. However it is not clear why an RCT could not have been considered. A pre-test post test only design must be considered as a pilot only .(criteria 2).
2. There is also no rationale for the use of structured interviews as opposed to semi-structured or unstructured for interviews for the clinical interface development. Using a structured interview limits the advantages of using qualitative methodology (rich, in depth information) by preventing the interviewers to probe elements further, thus this seems to be a potential weakness. Additionally, there is no information about how the first interview questions were decided upon or how many questions were included as part of the interviews (criteria 2).
3. Further information is required regarding the quality of the qualitative data. For example, have the authors used member checking? (criteria 2)
4. Figure 1 is unreadable, which makes it impossible to review this element. The authors refer to figure 1 (e.g. when stating that only 37 out of 139 referred patients began the intervention and 34 completed it) and that appears to be a small intake from a large pool of potential participants. In order to understand the reach of the study readers need to know how the eventual pool of participants. (criteria 9).
5. The sampling of patients was that physician-MA pair was asked to recruit 6-8 sedentary adults with coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, and/or BMI > 25. This resulted in 97% obese, 22% with type II diabetes and 8.1% with coronary heart disease- are these different patients group comparable? Additionally, 38% of patients had prior experience of using a pedometer – could this have influenced results? (criteria 2).

6. The authors need to amend their title, to inform the reader that this is a feasibility or pilot study that examines the use of the Stepping up to Health intervention as part of clinical practice (criteria 8).

Minor essential revisions:
1. Given that obese population were recruited and an increase in walking was observed, some results relating to whether the intervention has had any health benefits (e.g. weight loss, lower blood pressure etc) would have been a useful addition (criteria 3).

2. The authors have correctly used a paired t-test to analyse the quantitative data, however, they have not reported the whole statistic. The full statistic needs to be reported, not just the significance value. Additionally, the exact P value does not need to be provided, simply greater of less than 0.05 or less than 0.01 is sufficient (criteria 4).

3. The authors should provide a greater elaboration of the methodological limitations in the limitations section as opposed to simply stating them (criteria 7)

4. The writing needs some revision to improve flow. Writing should be from the third person perspective (criteria 9).

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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