Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: James Ralston

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This paper first describes the development of a clinical referral interface for an existing walking intervention program and then describes the experience of six physican/MA pairs and the walking outcomes of 37 of patients followed in the program. The walking program has formerly been tested and published as a standalone intervention. The area of research targeting improved physical activity and integrating these programs with clinical care is important.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The study had a good start at the description of the functionality providers desired for collaborating with patients. The study, though, lacked an approach that could have provided sufficient design specification needed to integrate the walking program into a collaborative model of care and the HIT functionality needed to support that model. Investigators could also have explored patients’ potential additional needs to support collaboration with providers. Although the paper says the design of the system incorporated elements of the patient centered medical home, the results suggest that a team based approach to the referral and follow-up process was not sufficiently explored or iterated in the design process. Without a more in depth and system level approach, the specifications for the functionality of the referral and follow-up system have limited generalizability.

2. The conclusions about the advantages of the SUH intervention and clinical interface are not consistently supported by the data. Results suggest that providers felt burdened by the referral process and were not likely to monitor patients after enrollment. Although the authors appropriately point out that the program could be improved by emphasizing a team based approach, I was not convinced the intervention would be acceptable or used in its current form. Further development and testing appear to be needed.

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

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