Reviewer's report

Title: Measuring the quality of patients' goals and action plans: development and validation of a novel tool

Version: 1 Date: 9 July 2012

Reviewer: Candace Nelson

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Needs revision – see below.

3. Are the data sound? This is difficult to ascertain, given my questions about the methods.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Needs revision – see below.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Yes, the authors have identified some important limitations to their study.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Methods: There is a very good description of the development of the GET-D,
including the relevant existing knowledge regarding action plans and the initial pilot testing and modifications to the instrument. However, the description of the methods for testing the psychometrics of the GET-D need to be greatly expanded. Who are the participants in this part of the study? How were they recruited? How were they randomized? It sounds like this was part of a larger study? If so, please say something about that larger study.

2. Introduction, 1st paragraph, last sentence: please qualify by adding “possibly” after “this mixed performance”.

3. Methods, 3rd paragraph: The authors state that there are seven additional criteria, but upon reading the rest of the paragraph it appears there are 3 criteria (one with 5 different parts). The final “criteria” isn’t stated as if it were required, but merely a judgement of quality (i.e., should read “the action plan must be feasible for the patient to carry out”).

4. Methods, 5th paragraph 1st sentence: please change “usability” to “usefulness” – avoid jargon when possible.

5. Methods, 5th paragraph, 2nd sentence: How were the raters paired to assess inter-rater reliability (was each rater always paired with the same person, or were they rotated so that each rater was paired with different raters?)

6. Methods, 9th paragraph, 4th sentence: “We recruited and trained two physician-fellows to use the GET-D to rate each goal and action plan.” Why did you use physicians? Is this level of expertise necessary to use the GET-D?

7. The authors need to more clearly distinguish the instrument that the patient completes in goal setting and developing their action plan from the evaluation tool used to evaluate those action plans. It seems these two pieces become quite muddled in the discussion section.

Discretionary Revisions

8. Results, 1st paragraph: The information provided on participants seems rather scanty. Would be nice to have more information about the participants such as, did they all have type 2 diabetes, some indication of the extent to which their diabetes is controlled or not (i.e., HbA1c), how long have they lived with diabetes, BMI, diet, physical activity, smoking status.

9. Discussion, the last sentence in the first paragraph: I think that saying this instrument provides the “missing link between patient education intervention and patient outcomes” is a bit strong – although it certainly adds more information to the picture by shedding light on the fact that what people DO with the tools they are given as part of a education intervention matter. This information could be used to inform intervention strategies, ensuring that information is delivered in ways that brings about the most effective action plans.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
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.