Reviewer’s report

Title: Improvement of primary care for patients with chronic heart failure: a pilot study.

Version: 1 Date: 4 September 2009

Reviewer: Margaret Stone

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Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Although it is probably just an error in the way things have been worded, the statement about ethics committee approval at the end of the article and the text about this in the methods section need to be consistent – in one place it says that approval was not needed and in the other that it was obtained. This needs clarification.

2. I would suggest that the conclusions are not strictly valid and may need re-phrasing. What the findings have indicated is that, although the intervention showed promise, modifications are needed prior to testing in a larger study.

Minor Essential Revisions
It is appreciated that the authors are from the Netherlands, but English usage needs correcting/improving in a number of places:

ABSTRACT
Methods – the ‘of’ following comprised should be deleted.
Results – ‘The attention for diet …’ does not read well. This needs re-phrasing, for example, as ‘Management relating to diet .....’
Influenza vaccination grade should be vaccination rate
‘As a result’ should be removed from the last sentence of this section, for improved clarity.

INTRODUCTION
Page 3 second paragraph – lifestyle is one word; issues are recommended should be is recommended (as this refers back to ‘providing’); variably results should be variable results; duplication on ‘in’ before outpatient; comprising of educational should be comprising educational (omitting ‘of’); second instance of recommendation should be recommendations in the sentence beginning ‘The programme...’; in the next sentence there is again an instance of incorrect use of ‘of’ after comprised.

METHODS
Design – In the second sentence ‘implying that’ needs replacing with ‘including’ and ‘were used should be removed.
Improvement programme – misuse of ‘of after comprised in first sentence; quit
smoking would be better phrased as smoking cessation; in the paragraph
beginning ‘In addition’ on page 5, lifestyle should be one word and ‘gave
attention to give advice’ needs changing (perhaps to ‘recommended giving
advice’); misuse of ‘of’ after comprised in sentence beginning ‘The
organizational’; last line of page 5 – ‘come to organizational adjustments’ needs
rephrasing, for example as ‘identify and make organisational …’.

RESULTS

Sample – Penultimate line, page 6 – ‘that’ is needed after ‘stated’; on page 7, in
the sentence beginning ‘Most GPs…’, commas after ‘in general’ and ‘in
particular’ would increase clarity; the next two sentence needs re-wording, for
example as ‘Involvement of a dietician or a physiotherapist in the care of heart
failure patients was formalized in three and two practices respectively. Eleven
GPs reported formal involvement of a cardiologist, one reported formal
involvement of a heart failure nurse and one formally involved a heart failure
outpatient clinic’ (is this what is meant by ‘out clinic’?).

Impact - in the fist sentence lifestyle should be one word and ‘got’ would be
better changed to the more formal ‘received’; in the last sentence on page 7,
were should be replaced by ‘where’, a comma is needed after answered, and
‘without beta-blocker’ would be better phrased as ‘not prescribed beta blockers’.

Feasibility – in the sentence beginning ‘Nine GPs’, ‘that’ is needed after
‘considered’.

DISCUSSION

Main conclusions – lifestyle (one word)

Interpretation – page 9, in the sentence beginning ‘Again, outcome..’, a comma is
needed after ‘consistent’ for this to make sense; in the sentence beginning
‘Although the impact’, ‘been’ is needed between ‘not … found’; last line, page 9 –
‘like’ after ‘look’ needs removing; page 10, last sentence of first paragraph – ‘ill’
needs changing to ‘ill’ and a comma needs adding after this word, also the word
‘outdoor’ does not exist – is hospital outpatient clinic what is meant? In the second
paragraph on page 10, ‘reflect improvements’ should be ‘reflects improvements’
(as this refers to percentage). In the sentence beginning ‘Our programme did
not…’, ‘give actual issues for improvement needs rephrasing, for example,
‘identify specific potential ways of improving interdisciplinary …’.

Strengths and weaknesses – in the last sentence, ‘as’ is needed between
regarded … acceptable.

Implications for research … First line – ‘the’ should be removed before
‘collaboration’

Conclusions - in the last sentence, attention for cooperation should be attention
to cooperation.

Discretionary Revisions

1. It would be useful to know the professional background of the ‘practice visitor’
– was this a health care professional or a non-medical researcher?

2. It would seem important to provide more specific information about uptake of the study by general practitioners who were invited, as this type of detail is important in considering the results of piloting. The actual number invited would be useful so that uptake can be accurately derived, rather than just reporting that a random sample was selected and uptake was low.

3. I would strongly suggest that this paper should be substantially shortened to reflect the fact that is a report of a pilot study. The introduction and discussion, in particular, could be much more concise and focused. The discussion would be improved by a focus on the ways in which the authors are considering changing the programme before further evaluation and any additional development work that they propose to carry out (such as the ‘barrier analysis’ that they mention).

**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