Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of a tailored, multi-component intervention for implementation of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines in primary care physical therapy: a non-randomized controlled study

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2013

Reviewer: Ilona Autti-Rämö

General issues
The research group has focused on an important topic; how effectively are guidelines implemented. However, as they have not been able to combine baseline and follow-up surveys on individual basis but they are both cross-sectional surveys it remains unclear what explains the relatively small change. They have gathered some very important background variables (age, time of graduation, work experience) that could be used to explain some of the results eg who changed attitude and who implemented the guideline in practice but this information has not been used (or could not be used?). A major pitfall is also that the authors did not ask whether the PTs took care of the relevant patients (having the problem that the guideline was focused on). Thus it is quite unclear why the PTs didn’t use the guideline, it may well be that they did not take care of such patients. Or that they relied on their personal experience. Or they didn’t thrust on the guideline producing group/produced evidence or…

Major changes
1. The article is far too long, it can be shortened on all levels/chapters.

Introduction:
2. The authors need to explain how the guidelines were produced. Who decided that they are needed and is the county supporting the use of these guidelines? If a need for guideline isn’t supported by the whole PT community it’s difficult to implement any. It’s difficult to understand that one could produce guidelines but offer information only on selected workplaces. As so many form the control group were also aware of the guidelines on has to assume that the guidelines must have been published openly.

method:
3. It is unclear who ordered the development of guidelines and who should have supported the use of them. PT organization? health authorities? county? The authors need to explain the process that led to forming the guidelines more explicitly.

4. Was the implementation supported by the county or was it done only as part of research? How to explain the low participation rate at the seminars?

5. Was “the seminar for all” an optimal strategy, why not train “ambassadors” that
should have trained the PTs at their workplace. It is not feasible to train every individual out of office – too costly.

6. The content of the seminar is unclear. Was 1 hour lectures and 1 hour interaction? was it during working hours or in the evening? Was the participation supported by employers?

7. It is quite unclear how 37% of the control group were aware of the guideline at the baseline yet it is stated in the method part that they were left out of information that was provided only for the intervention group. Was the access to web site yet open for everybody?

8. There needs to be a time line to show when the guidelines were formed, when base line survey was made, when was the intervention and when was the follow-up survey done.

9. As the authors did not ask whether the PT had any relevant patients (guideline specific problems) how is it possible to use the question on “use of guideline” as a marker for actual use for specific patients? needs to be clarified results

10. How did the authors receive the information of 10% staff turnover?

11. It’s unclear how to explain the results for the control group (baseline) if they didn’t get any information about the guideline

12. Can the authors make any analysis concerning the background information. What might explain why many don’t use the guidelines even though they know about them? .

Discussion

13. should be shortened. The results are truly modest and based on this study it’s not possible to draw conclusion on explanations. Much of the methods and theory has already been discussed in the introduction and it’s not necessary to repeat them. The discussion should be focused only on the major results – what might explain them - and on the limitations of the study. It should also be discussed what ought to have been done differently (eg. forming the questions, being able to combine baseline and follow-up data o individual level, content of intervention etc)

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 interest.