Reviewer's report

Title: The contribution of qualitative research in designing a complex intervention for secondary prevention of coronary heart disease in two different healthcare systems [ISRCTN24081411]

Version: 3 Date: 1 May 2006

Reviewer: Graham Watt

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a modest, but important paper, whose opportunistic design compares and contrasts patient and professional views about CHD prevention in primary care, before and after a pilot intervention, in the contrasting health care contexts of primary care in the north and south of Ireland.

The value of the study, other than for the local purpose of informing an intervention, lies in the richness of the comparisons, which are possible between two neighbouring primary care cultures.

The study is neat, elegant and efficient. Some of the findings are predictable, but the expressed need for stress counselling was not, and this may be an important observation.

I think that anyone designing a complex intervention, without a preparatory qualitative phase, is likely to think again, having read this paper.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

I have little else to say, except.

â€œDataâ€ are plural, not singular.

The Tables provide more information on the details of the participants than is necessary â€“ this could be cut down.

The final sentence of the conclusion could leave out the reference to funding and just say that qualitative research may be a valuable component of the preparation for complex interventions and their evaluation.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

What next?: Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have acted as an international reviewer for research programmes funded by the Irish Health Research Board, including the SPHERE Study, referred to in this paper.