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: 15 May 2006

Reviewer: Gene Feder

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper reports a qualitative study that was an integral part of designing a primary care based CHD secondary prevention intervention and its piloting in northern and southern Ireland. It makes an original, well articulated methodological contribution to the design of complex interventions and is sufficiently concrete to convince the reader that qualitative enquiry is a useful tool in this design process. My only disappointment is that the authors do not show how they combined qualitative with survey or process data from the pilot to further develop and refine the intervention. By publishing analysis of the quantitative data in a separate paper, they are missing an opportunity to show how different methods can be combined for intervention design purposes. They also do not show how they integrated data from the qualitative study into the theoretical framework of the intervention or whether the framework needed to be revised in the light of that data. This is not the same as changing components of the intervention itself. One small point, unrelated to the focus of the paper, is the narrow specification of patients with CHD, only including those with an MI or revascularisation.

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Major Compulsory Revisions

None

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Minor Essential Revisions

Defending the exclusion of patients with angina but no hx of MI or revasc

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Addressing my general points.

Which journal?: Not appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article whose findings are important to those with closely related interests and more suited to BMC Health Services Research

What next?: Offer publication in BMC Health Services Research after minor essential revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.