Author's response to reviews

Title: The development of a theory-based intervention to promote appropriate disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia

Authors:

Robbie Foy (r.c.foy@ncl.ac.uk)
Jillian J Francis (j.francis@abdn.ac.uk)
Marie Johnston (m.johnston@abdn.ac.uk)
Martin Eccles (martin.eccles@ncl.ac.uk)
Jan Lecouturier (jan.lecouturier@ncl.ac.uk)
Claire Bamford (c.h.bamford@ncl.ac.uk)
Jeremy Grimshaw (jgrimshaw@ohri.ca)

Version: 2 Date: 20 September 2007

Author's response to reviews:

Response to BMC HSR reviewers: The development of a theory-based intervention to promote appropriate disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the reviewers. We welcome their positive reception of this manuscript and their suggested improvements. We have addressed these as follows.

Reviewer 1

On page 7, last paragraph, authors state: we also added exploratory items on perceived roles within the teams because these may influence intention to perform disclosure behaviour. What is the theoretical rationale for that?

RESPONSE: We are grateful for the prompt to clarify this text. It now reads:

As the above theories are concerned with individual behaviour, we also added three exploratory, non-theory based questions on perceived roles within the teams on the basis that perceived role may influence intention to perform disclosure behaviours. We were aware that perceived roles and responsibilities for the three behaviours might vary between different professional groups, e.g. giving the actual diagnosis might be perceived as a primary role of the psychiatrist but not (say) the occupational therapist. We therefore added team factor variables to explore their contributions to variation in intention. The questions concerned whether respondents believed each behaviour was his/her responsibility and the perceived reliability of colleagues in performing each behaviour.

On page 13, 5th line, change and to or.


It would be easier to follow the seven steps of developing a theory-based intervention if they were numbered in their label in the text, e.g. Step 1: Specification of the target behaviours.

Reviewer 2

This is an interesting manuscript, designed to describe the process of developing an intervention to promote appropriate disclosure of a diagnosis of dementia. An earlier phase has previously been published in Implementation Science, and an evaluation of the intervention will be reported elsewhere. A key question for this review, then, is: does this manuscript add sufficiently to the literature? I think there are some issues to be addressed before it does.

First, I fully endorse the principles underpinning the development of interventions of this kind that are laid out in Table 1. However, it then seems counterintuitive seemingly to dispense with these principles and focus on only a couple of variables. It is not made clear how this manuscript takes us further than the standard approach to developing interventions that is critiqued in the Introduction.

Second, there seems to be some oversight regarding the status of predictive variables in multiple regression, which boils down to the distinction between predicting something and explaining something (e.g., Sutton, 1998). The difficulty is that although the significant variables in the regression equations can be said to be predictive of intention, there is no evidence to suggest they are explanatory. In other words, if (for example) self-efficacy is predictive of intention, it does not necessarily mean that changing self-efficacy will bring about a change in intention. All that can be said for sure is that people who are low in self-efficacy should receive some sort of intervention, but not that a change in self-efficacy would necessarily bring about a change in intention.

RESPONSE: We have sought to clarify our wording by using “predicting” more consistently. We agree that targeting people with (for example) low self-efficacy and thereby increasing self-efficacy may not necessarily bring about a change in intention. Nevertheless, it seems sensible to target the variables that predict intention rather than the variable that do not. This is the reason that the interventional modelling experiment approach not only uses theory but tests theory, by applying an experimental design to assess whether changing variables that predict intention results in changing intention. We see this theory-testing function as a particular strength of intervention modelling experiments. We have inserted a further comment in the discussion to highlight this and place it in the context of our experimental work.

More generally, it might be useful to refer to a recent meta-analysis (Webb & Sheeran, 2006), which shows a cause-and-effect relationship between intention and behaviour to strengthen the justification for using intention as an outcome measure.


RESPONSE: We referred to related works in our recently published paper (the predictive survey) in Implementation Science. However, we agree that this issue is also worth highlighting in this manuscript and appreciate the suggested references. We have therefore made this change within the start of the methods section.

We hope that these changes satisfactorily address the points and suggestions raised by the reviewers.

Yours sincerely

Robbie Foy