Reviewer's report

Title: Physical activity promotion as a policy problem: Applying a concept from policy analysis to a public health issue

Version: 1 Date: 3 October 2012

Reviewer: Deborah Gleeson

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

This is a well-written and well argued paper that has the potential to make a strong contribution to the literature, and its use of policy theory is commendable. There is, however, a fundamental conceptual issue that needs to be resolved prior to publication.

The authors use Peters’ analytic scheme to explore physical activity promotion (“PAP”) as a policy problem. However PAP, if Peters’ conceptualization is correctly applied, is not a policy problem in itself but rather a set of interventions, policy instruments or policy responses designed to address the policy problem of physical inactivity. PAP could also be understood to have a number of policy problems associated with it (e.g. the limited effectiveness of PAP programs). But it does not make sense to construct PAP itself as a policy problem.

If physical activity promotion (PAP) is taken as the policy problem, several core arguments of the paper are problematic – e.g. how can PAP be chronic in nature (p. 2); how can it be ‘solved’ (p. 8-9, 19)?

The paper’s lack of clarity about the policy problem being explored reduces the value of the insights it generates. The paper needs some reframing throughout to clarify the policy problem that is being explored.

Minor essential revisions

Page 3, line 2, insert “A” before “Medline”
Page 4, line 11, close bracket before [14,15]

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 interests.