Reviewer's report

Title: Do self-reported intentions predict clinicians behaviour: a systematic review.

Version: 1 Date: 20 June 2006

Reviewer: Ian Kellar

Reviewer's report:

General

This systematic review examines the utility of intentions in predicting healthcare professionals' behaviour, noting that this will point to its utility as an intervention target and interim endpoint for further studies. The review identifies just 10 studies (N=3777) that predominantly used the TRA/TPB to guide the constructs that were measured.

The research question is novel, and stated clearly. However, the background literature relating to behavioural intentions is given limited coverage, with several key meta-analyses of the utility of the TPB that speak to the utility of intention omitted (e.g. Conner & Armitage, 1998; Godin & Kok, 1996; Hausenblas, Carron, & Mack, 1997). Their inclusion would highlight the variability in the utility of the construct that has been long acknowledged (e.g. Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992). The further omission of any mention of the intention-behaviour gap misses the opportunity to ground discussion the professional constraints (moderators of cognition " behaviour relationships in this context) in the related literature (e.g. Cooke & Sheeran, 2004; Sheeran & Abraham, 2003).

The methodology is very clearly reported, with data sources, search terms, inclusion and the flow of included studies provided so as to enable replication. The literature search appears rigorous, and study quality is addressed in the form of intention " behaviour correspondence. However inter-rater agreement on inclusion or intention " behaviour correspondence was not reported overall or by study.

The data extraction categories are well chosen, and provide adequate data to evaluate the relevance of the individual studies to the research question. However, the data abstraction process is not detailed, and it is unclear whether the 4 authors who were identified as being involved duplicated the process independently. The summary results for each study appear to be informed by the relevant recommendations from the QUOROM statement. The summary of the relationship between intention and behaviour usefully distinguishes between studies that used self-report and observed, reported or traceable behaviour. However, it is left to the reader to summarise by rated correspondence between intention and behaviour measures from the tables, despite being acknowledged as a key step in using theory, and this correspondence being a main theme in the discussion.

Sensible recommendations for future research are made that are very clearly drawn from the review findings. Again, by not drawing on the literature on moderators of the intention behaviour relationship, the discussion of factors specific to healthcare professionals'™ practice that may modify the relationship between intention and behaviour, the discussion does not point to how future studies might examine this issue. However, the conclusion that intention remains a useful construct in terms of predicting behaviour in this context, and as such, may represent a valid interim endpoint for future evaluations of intervention studies, is a useful contribution.

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

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

Intention should be explicitly defined.

Summarise inter-rater agreement on inclusion.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Evidence of variability of utility of intention in predicting behaviour, and known moderators of its utility should be covered.

Report inter-rater agreement by trial.

Report inter-rater agreement on intention â€“ behaviour correspondence overall and by trial.

Compare intention â€“ behaviour correlations between studies with good, unclear, and poor intention â€“ behaviour correspondence in the results section.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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.