Reviewer's report

Title: Implementing and managing self management skills training within Primary Care Organisations: A national survey of the Expert Patients Programme

Version: 1 Date: 20 December 2005

Reviewer: Patricia M Wilson

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a very interesting paper that has the potential to add valuable knowledge and understanding of the implementation of Expert Patient Programmes. However, whilst it is based on sound empirical work the paper would be improved by the articulation of limitations and alternative interpretations.

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

1. Success of the EPP is seen purely in terms of the numbers of courses run and anticipated numbers of future programmes. Whilst this is congruent with the description of the Department of Health's response to the pilot which is briefly mentioned both in the Abstract and third paragraph of the introduction, the paper would benefit from the acknowledgement of alternative criteria of success. Examples are evidence of EPP as a trigger for the development of user initiated, independent support groups (Wilson & Mayor in press, British Journal of Community Nursing, 11, 1), or changes in health professionals' responses towards self-management. If the scope of the study did not include an exploration of other criteria of success then this should be acknowledged as a limitation. Alternatively, if the purpose of the paper was to compare specific findings with the Department of Health's response to the pilot then this should be made clear.

2. It should also be acknowledged within the paper that only one model of EPP delivery is being considered. For example, some "successful" (in terms of courses run, recruitment and sustainability)PCTs are those who have commissioned licensed voluntary organizations to recruit, administer and run the course. There appears a strong link with this and the view expressed in the top paragraph on page 5.

3. The last sentence of the paper appears incongruent with the underpinning philosophy of the EPP as lay-led with minimal health professional intervention. The tension between this philosophy and self-care training developed by professionals merits some exploration.

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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)


5. The abstract is a little wooden and could be developed to flow more.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory 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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.