Reviewer's report

Title: A Social Marketing Approach to Implementing Evidence-based Practice: The TIDES Depression Collaborative Care Model in the Veterans Health Administration Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Version: Date: 11 October 2006
Reviewer: Lynne Nemeth

Reviewer's report:

General:

This paper outlines the methods of a social marketing approach that is being used by the VHA to implement the TIDES depression collaborative care model. While several other papers have referred to the underpinnings of a social marketing approach in their background sections when describing implementations of evidence-based practice initiatives, this paper substantially describes the theoretical basis for such an approach and uses an example of how this can be accomplished, by applying this approach to depression care improvement. Many quality improvement implementations face similar challenges, and this paper offers a deeper perspective for considering how we might apply this concept.

The VHA infrastructure for implementing quality improvement is complex and a bit more formal than exist in many other healthcare environments, thus making it important to detail how a systematic roll-out of an initiative might occur. This paper spends a fair amount describing the infrastructure, and less detail to the specifics of the depression collaborative. Some more specific examples that were used for depression would have made this process more clear. Table 2 provides an example of social marketing messages using a smoking cessation example, which is also used in page 10. It would have been more useful to provide a more specific example for depression to contextualize the process within this collaborative. For the TIDES intervention, how were the messages distilled? What did an evidence-based summary include? How were competing priorities within the organization addressed to allow the focus on improvement in depression care management? What outcome measures were used to measure effectiveness of the social marketing process for this collaborative? By illustrating the specifics to these questions this paper can inform substantially on how social marketing applies to a specific topic rather than conceptual.

Table 3 offers a broad view of how the social marketing approach is used to effect behavior change, and is very helpful. However, again, it is being presented in the conceptual format, rather than the specific way it might be used for depression. By modifying some of the details in the context of depression care this paper can provide a unique contribution to the literature.

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

1. Provide specific social marketing messages used for depression care improvement. Figure 1 is not specific enough to contextualize the process of depression care improvement.
2. Add specific discussion of how competing agendas for improvement are handled at the local implementation level. It would be useful to frame social marketing to address a specific topic in this way, since that is the realistic context many healthcare environments face.
3. Describe how evaluation of social marketing occurs. Using the depression example, what concrete outcomes were measured and improved?

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

1. Consider deleting some of the infrastructure of the VHA system. It gets in the way of the more specific and useful methodological approaches to implementation of an improvement.
2. Spend more emphasis on the “national dissemination package”, as this is the core of what can be
replicated by others.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Consider revising the title. It is very long.

**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.