Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing fidelity of delivery of smoking cessation behavioural support in practice.

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2013

Reviewer: Gregory B Teague

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript offers a strong contribution to the literature on fidelity assessment, providing an informative initial step in evaluating the fidelity of smoking-cessation programs. As the authors note, subsequent application of this approach will be necessary to derive generalizable inferences about the state of the field more broadly, but even a convenience sample of n=2 is sufficient to indicate that such a step will be quite worthwhile.

In discussion, the authors appropriately note important issues not always carefully considered. The provision of techniques that are not specified in a manual might typically be considered as noise; but these could range from detrimental, to neutral though representing an opportunity cost in provider effort, to beneficial though of yet unknown benefit (my phrasing, not necessarily theirs). The authors rightly suggest that these need to be measured and accounted for in research analyses. They also suggest that more careful attention should be paid to the relevance and benefit of specific intervention components to individuals of varying characteristics, allowing more nuanced specification of model components.

Discretionary revisions

One change in the manuscript would help many readers. The initial section of the results provides quantitative results in narrative form, providing summations of data referred to in Table 1 by Service and phase. An alternative would be to provide some of this information in tabular form, likely following rather than built into Table 1. This section could be more concise, and readers could get a better view of cross-service and cross-phase differences. This recommendation is offered as a “discretionary revision” rather than “major compulsory revision” because it is not essentially substantive, but this reader does think it would strengthen the manuscript.

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.