Reviewer’s report

Title: Feasibility, acceptability and potential efficacy of a mobile health (mHealth) weight management programme for New Zealand adults

Version: 1 Date: 15 May 2014

Reviewer: Carol Wham

Reviewer’s report:

Minor essential Revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The study seeks to evaluate the feasibility of a weight management programme for ethnically diverse NZ adults using a library of text messages. This is a potentially innovative and cost effective approach to address this issue especially if acceptable to ethnically diverse adults who need to lose weight. As acknowledged by the authors the study was underpowered to detect a difference in weight loss with only 36 participants completing measurements at a 12 week follow up. The feasibility and acceptability measures are well defined but the study limitations need to be adequately addressed.

Please attend to the following essential revisions

Abstract

Methods refer to an 8 week programme – but this is confused by 12 week measurements in results and with text Page 7 line 6 and page 9 line 121 describing a 12 week programme.

Results— provide mean BMI for perspective of weight loss.

Background is well written and provides a sound rationale for the study.

Page 5 line 11, indicate NZ Dollars.

Page 5 line 20, insert are unsuitable

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Method

Page 6 line 49, clarify target population input from priority ethnic groups in study aim

Page 7 line 54, clarify target population see page 14 line 225, page 16 line 284

Page 7 line 69, change to and to rate

Page 8 line 93, change to advertisements

Page 9 line 104, include all measures in Table 1 i.e. sleep, alcohol, comorbidities

Page 9 lines 120-124, would be helpful to outline rationale for physical activity and dietary self-monitoring in background and in reference to discussion page 15
3. Are the data sound?
Please provide age range of participants (Table 1)
Why was BP recorded?
Page 11 line 159, insert results for household income

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Suggest revision of participant feedback responses Table 2 to avoid repetition in discussion, provide n% in same column. It is unclear why feedback was not provided on the toolkit.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
In general the discussion provides a comprehensive overview of the implications of the feasibility study findings to inform a larger study trial. Of the 154 adults who responded to the advertisements 60% were screened for eligibility. What factors might be involved in losing participant interest? And dropout rate of target male Pacific participants? How significant is the problem of attracting participants with a higher income and educational level? How can this be addressed.
Personalised messages were a desirable programme component identified from focus groups page 7, line 56. It is unclear from the results whether the programme was adapted to provide tailored and personalised messages. Please discuss importance of this for engagement of future participants.
The toolkit provided an essential programme module. It is unclear if this hard copy information was used and which aspects of the content were helpful.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Limitations of the study need to be more clearly addressed in light of the above.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
See above

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Please refer to comments above.

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'