Reviewer's report

Title: Illness beliefs and the sociocultural context of diabetes self-management in British South Asians: A mixed methods study

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Reviewer: Michael Smith

Reviewer's report:

This study undertook a mixed-methods approach to investigate relationships between illness beliefs, social networks, fatalism and health outcomes in South Asian individuals with diabetes. The mixed qualitative and quantitative approach offered some novel insight into this question and the findings offer some useful implications for policy and practice. It would have been useful to have included a comparison group of White British individuals to probe specifically where differences between these two ethnic groups in relation to the outcomes under investigation may lie. However, the study offers a novel contribution to the literature nonetheless.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Were the questionnaires presented in the participants’ first language or in English? Given that some participants required the use of an interpreter for the qualitative study, I wonder whether all participants would have adequately understood all of the questions without a translation if the questionnaires were indeed printed in English? Could the authors add this information to the manuscript, and if the questionnaires were printed in English, some consideration of the point which I raise regarding comprehension difficulties could perhaps be included in the Discussion.

2. If I understand the demographic questions correctly, it seems that 84% of participants in this sample had a chronic comorbid condition. Could this have impacted on the study findings?

3. Both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes patients are included, but it is likely that there are substantial differences between these two groups with respect to a number of the concepts under investigation. Could the authors comment further?

4. A substantial sub-section of the Results describes the average values for the illness beliefs, social network and health outcome data. While I appreciate the value of the reporting of these descriptive statistics, I wonder whether such an in depth description of these averages is warranted here. Particularly because there is no comparison group against which any meaningful conclusions can be drawn (i.e. it would have been interesting to compare the South Asian sample with a sample of White British individuals to investigate precisely how these ethnic groups may differ. I understand that this is beyond the scope of the study, but I nevertheless wonder whether the Results section could be trimmed back a little
in this regard, and the authors could mention in the Discussion the potential benefits to clinical practice of a direct comparison of these two ethnic groups).

5. It is stated (line 309) that participants’ ages will be included with the qualitative annotations, but this doesn’t seem to have been incorporated into the manuscript.

6. Line 536: It is stated that the quantitative finding that control beliefs are positively related to health status ‘contradict’ the qualitative findings. However, this argument should be toned down/reconceptualised, as while the qualitative study investigated control beliefs, it was not really geared up to investigate the relationship between control beliefs and health status.

7. The manuscript comprises several typographical/grammatical errors, some of which are noted below. The authors should carefully proofread their manuscript prior to resubmission:
   Line 47: “Beliefs about diabetes beliefs” please reword
   Line 58-60: This sentence is a little unclear; consider rewording
   Line 95: “inform” should read ‘informing
   Line 97-98: “insights into causal on self-management”- this is unclear and needs rewording
   Line 104-106: This sentence is also unclear and needs rewording
   Line 177: “exercise, smoking” should read “exercise and smoking”
   Line 539: “finding” should be plural

Discretionary Revisions

8. It is a shame that self-care questions relating to blood glucose testing were not included, as this may well have been very insightful. Could the authors comment upon this?

9. I wonder whether it would be possible within the scope of this investigation to also run some regression analyses to determine which illness beliefs best predict diabetes self-management in this population?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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