Reviewer’s report

Title: Co-occurrence of risky health behaviours: results from the Pre-Empt study.

Version: 3
Date: 14 July 2015

Reviewer: Chris Keyworth

Reviewer’s report:

Dear authors,

Thank you for submitting your article examining the co-occurrence of risky behaviours in general practice. This is certainly a timely piece of work given the prevalence of problematic health behaviours and in particular the relationship these have with developing long-term conditions.

This is an interesting piece of work. I have provided some comments that should help strengthen the manuscript.

A general point is to ensure that the paper is correctly framed in terms of the main aim of the study. It seems that this paper is about the prevalence of multiple risky behaviours. There are a couple of points where the writing drifts into talking about how risk factors are discussed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract
Lines 30-31 – when you talk about being ‘routinely discussed’ this gives me the impression that the study is about how practitioners discuss risk factors with patients. This paper seems to about the prevalence of risk factors. Suggest remove, or adding this line to the conclusion – it is an important discussion point but not the focus of this paper. The aim on the following line is very clear.

Conclusion section needs a line about implications of the findings – my point above should address this.

Background
Line 113 – 115 – good point but needs to be clearer. Are you suggesting that highlighting risk factors is a form of primary/secondary prevention of long-term conditions such as CVD? As I understand it your study is about patients who have no existing long-term condition associated with unhealthy lifestyle

Methods
Line 164 – please explain why the questionnaire completion was timed
Line 171-177 – please provide more detail about the measures used. For example AUDIT-C – was this based on the number of units of alcohol consumed? Over what period of time? Same with HIS – based on how many cigarettes smoked?
Line 179 – reference 29 – is this the correct reference or should it be the government guidelines that you refer to?
Results
Line 210 – suggest removing the ‘other’ as it doesn’t add anything to the results
Lines 227 – 239 – there are some interesting findings here that you could make more of. Particularly the combinations of behaviours that you make reference to. Diet is part of 4 of the 5 combinations, exercise part of 3 of 5. Could you pull this through to the discussion perhaps?

Discussion
Line 276 – make reference to ‘particular health conditions’ – for example lifestyle management is very important for people with CVD and diabetes.
Line 296 – ‘In this study, screening was completed by the research team prior to patients going into their appointment thus ‘priming’ the clinician as to which areas might be of benefit to discuss as well as relieving some of the pressure on their time’ – I am a little unclear on this point. So the results of the screening were relayed to the GP in which they had a discussion? Is this relevant here? May need to add to the methods to clarify this. The full-trial paper could be referenced.
Line 308 – when talking about the practicalities of the tools used – you may need to consider adding this to the limitations
Line 318 – please explain ‘spill-over effects’
Line 329 – very few patients?

Discretionary Revisions
Abstract
Lines 43-44 – suggest removing the acronyms from here – use the line on 162-163.
Line 53 – do you mean ‘most likely’ or ‘most common’?
Line 54 – 21.8% of patients?
Line 58 – very few patients?

Background
Line 80-81 – suggest sticking to one term – either risky or unhealthy
Line 123 – you could make reference here to NICE guidelines. For example CVD prevention guidelines state that healthcare professional should address lifestyle where the opportunity arises
Line 128 – ‘identification of patterns of health behaviours among different populations’ – I am unclear what you mean by this. Could you clarify? Are you looking at patterns related to the different characteristics of the population? Age, gender etc

I hope you find the comments useful – best of luck with the submission.

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