Reviewer's report

Title: Importance Attributed to Components of a Self-Management Program by Individuals with Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury: Pilot Results from a Canadian Survey

Version: 2 Date: 7 July 2014

Reviewer: Elizabeth Dean

Reviewer's report:

The Ms. has been improved. The investigators have considered the majority of the points made by myself and the other reviewer.

I appreciate having the questionnaire to review. Being able to see the survey was helpful to me in making recommendations for how to better package the work into a publication.

The online survey questionnaire consisted of Part 1 with 19 questions about the participant and history; Part 2 with 16 questions about participants' views (importance rating of components of self-management programs and opinions about the optimal delivery of such programs); and Part 3 consisting of several established scales (i.e., self efficacy scale (question 2 of Part 3 does not seem to fit here); mastery or locus of control scale, patient activation measure, hospital anxiety and depression scale, cognitive symptom management, and communication with physician scale.

Based on examination of the survey questionnaire and the manuscript, I believe that the manuscript needs to be re-written for tighter congruence of the purpose, methods, findings and implications, as well as grammar and composition errors remain and need correction and the precision of the scientific writing continues to need strengthening (for an academic piece of work, I rate the writing in general as poor, which compromises the potential merit of the work).

Survey Questionnaire

Although the questionnaire is a ‘fait accompli’ and was approved by the ethics committee, I alerted to the statement that ‘We will be speaking to..’ when in fact an online survey was conducted. The interest in the work was stated but the purpose is implied not explicit. What category of information was been sought? Preferences? Degree of importance? Relevance? Beliefs? Views? In Part 2 which focuses on the variables of interest, there are two levels of questions based on how they are written, i.e., ‘rate importance’ of the components of self-management programs and ‘thoughts about’ (opinions) about the delivery of such programs. My previously recommended title edit did not reflect ‘opinions’ about the delivery. Based on this revelation, I now suggest a title such as:

‘Views of People with Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury about the Components of
The word ‘views’ is a general word to encompass ‘importance rating’ of program components and ‘opinions’ about delivery. This is needed in my view.

I recommend a search of each usage of the word ‘preference(s)’ (of which there are many), and replace the appropriate word (importance rating or thoughts (opinions). There is no mention of preference in the introduction to the questionnaire or in any of the questions. Had this word been used, different results could have emerged.

Scientific Integrity and Internal Consistency of the Study

A disconnect remains between the purpose, the variables recorded in the questionnaire, the reporting of the findings, and implications. For example, even though the established tools in Part 3 are of interest and potentially relevant, how these align with the purpose is unclear. I appreciate the sample size is small so perhaps stratifying and analyzing the data based on these variables is not feasible. It is not clear how these data fit and why. Because data stratification is not feasible, perhaps the scores of these scales should appear as descriptive statistics in a separate table so the reader can get a feel for the sample on those dimensions. Minimally, how these domains compare with the findings of other studies of community living individuals living with traumatic spinal cord injury could be one way of justifying and using these data.

Editorial

In addition to the need for improved grammar and composition, and quality of the scientific writing, the investigators are advised to use standard formatting of the tables, e.g., the titles are cryptic and incomplete. A title should stand alone.

Abstracts are most challenging to write given word limitations. However, the abstract needs to be more explanatory and pithier. The total number of participants needs to be given. There is no mention or support/justification for the scale data in Part 3. This is not a trivial inclusion to the questionnaire overall and needs to be better integrated. Overall, I recommend the abstract be aligned
with my recommendations above.

It is not a reviewer’s job to point out composition and grammar errors but I have listed some (not exhaustive):

The use of ‘make up’ for the components of a self-management program is colloquial. One suggestion is ‘construction of program components’.

Page 3 Para 2. Delete ‘recently’ as this is subjective particularly when the work is four years old.

Page 3 Line 2nd from the bottom of the page. Example of cryptic wording. Edit to something like ‘(...modules adapted for people dependent on wheelchairs or with limited mobility).’

Page 3 Last line
Edit to something like ‘..as in the case of individuals..’

Page 4 First line
Replace ‘good’ with ‘effective’ if that is intended. ‘Good’ is unclear.

Page 4 5th last line of Introduction (objective)
Edit to something like ‘Thus, the objective of this study was to determine the importance attributed to the components of a self-management program by individuals with traumatic SCI, and explore their opinions about the delivery of such a program.’

Page 4 5th line from the bottom. Edit to ‘...accidents, and sporting accidents),’ (Note: in a string of examples, the use of etc. is redundant).

Page 4 3rd line from the bottom. Technically, ‘previously’ is redundant because this is implied with the use of the past tense of the verb. However, I see what you are implying (prior to this study).

Page 5 Line 4
I believe ‘FluidSurveys’ should be ‘FluidSurveys®’.

Page 5 Para 2 Line 3. Edit to ‘..emerged from the ..’

Page 8 8th line from bottom. Should ‘numbers’ not be ‘number’?
Page 8 3rd line from bottom. Delete 'at this point'.

Page 9 Line 6 from bottom. I believe this should be ‘cited by’ vs. ‘cited amongst’.

Page 10 The use of the following construction here and elsewhere in the Ms. is awkward, i.e., ‘…the modules (i.e., content)…’ Why not simply ‘program content modules’ or ‘content modules’ as appropriate?

Page 10. This section is riddled with the word ‘preference(s)’ which needs to be fixed as well as in the Discussion, Conclusion and elsewhere.

Page 13 Para 1 Last line. My personal preference in the parentheses would be to include a non pharmacological intervention as well to balance medication approaches to depression, given there is little evidence to show pharmacological interventions are superior to non pharmacological interventions, and that the latter has fewer side effects if any and can be empowering.

Page 15 Para 2 Lines 2 to 5. Awkward construction of these two sentences that needs fixing. Something like ‘Although the sampling frame was national, the resulting sample was small and may not be representative of the population.’

Page 15 4th line from the bottom. Delete ‘and’

Page 16 re Munce et al unpublished findings. First, remove citation from the Conclusion section.

Any chances this work has been published yet given it is cited a number of times?

Last sentence edit to two sentences (but refine further to ensure they align well with preceding sentences). ‘Future research is needed to evaluate how the views of people with traumatic SCI change over time. Our findings could be used … with traumatic SCI.’

All the table titles need to be written explicitly and clearly and the content of the tables.