Reviewer’s report

Title: Development of a text message intervention aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm in patients admitted to hospital as a result of injury

Version: Date: 25 February 2015

Reviewer: Ryan Courtney

Reviewer’s report:

The paper is well written (albeit very long) and in some parts greater clarity is needed. A number of modifications are put forward which can improve the paper. The issues raised however should not detract from the importance of well-conducted qualitative analyses, in an area that needs further research attention.

This paper aimed to test/pilot a text message program to reduce hazardous alcohol use via adopting an in-depth interview/qualitative framework. The primary purpose of this manuscript was to inform the text message content of a larger RCT.

The authors created and evaluated the content of a mobile phone technology text message BI service to reduce harmful drinking but it is not quite clear why a sample of participants was recruited (5/14) that indicated non-hazardous drinking and “were not strictly the target audience”. It is not particularly clear to the reader why this group was included; why test an intervention to reduce hazardous drinking among a sample (over a third) that do not self-report the targeted behaviour under investigation. This needs to be justified as it does cast some doubt on the generalizability of the findings.

Major compulsory revisions

Introduction

On a number of occasions in the manuscript assertions are made i.e. “low” with no attempt made to quantify or describe in % terms the extent or magnitude of the problem.

Example 1: “BI can reduce alcohol intake” – explain by how much, in what population and what are the percentage differences across countries?

Example 2: “Screening and BI is reported to be implemented rarely”

Example 3: “Similar findings of low uptake are reported”

Example 4: “In a small study”

The introduction would be improved by:

- Keeping all tables in the method or results section;
- providing more clarity on the current literature e.g. the sample (N = ?), country, type of participants and the study design employed when discussing
effectiveness of text message interventions to reduce hazardous drinking levels;
• Clearly articulating how the proposed text message technology is different and new compared to existing technologies and where is it moving the field of research;
• The following sections should be moved to the method section:
o Paragraph 3 on page 4 beginning “The initial text message content…”; and
o “This approach is described in Figure 1… from the outset”

Method
“mobile phone uptake is high..”. This section should be moved to the introduction.
How many inpatients declined the offer of study participation? Is there any data on socio-demographics of this group? Inclusion of this data would be helpful. Was there any responder bias?
How many interviewers conducted the interviews with participants? Or did one person complete all the interviews F2F.
Text message content. What was the reading age level of the content piloted? Was it tested pre-and post?
Little detail is provided on reason for inpatient admission. Was alcohol or other substance abuse a contributing factor to admission? And what proportion of participants did this apply to?

Results
This section is very long and needs to be shortened. It would be helpful if further headings and sub-heading were included to orient the reader to each theme.

Discussion
The section on “mobile phone uptake” is repetitive and echoes what is already written previously in the manuscript.
The authors need to consider the generalizability of the findings and justify the inclusion of the sub-group that were not hazardous drinkers.

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