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: 1 Date: 23 March 2015

Reviewer: Brian Suffoletto

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14 trauma inpatients were shown a paper form with a theoretical text message-delivered intervention written out, and were asked to comment on specific messages and general feelings. The authors report on their interpretations of these transcripts and discuss how these findings shaped their intervention.

Very little is known how to design acceptable and useful automated mobile communication-based interventions for behaviour change, especially for alcohol use disorder. The strength of this manuscript is that it attempts to elucidate unique preferences of drinkers for messages. Several issues dampen my enthusiasm for publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The authors do not follow standard reporting for qualitative research, as recommended by COREQ. For example, no mention is made of how participants were chosen (consecutive, convenience?), who conducted interviews, how long they took, were field notes taken/used, were responses coded, were interview questions established in a field guide, were themes identified systematically, was saturation reached, and how was it defined.

Minor Essential Revisions:

2. The study had a very small sample size, especially when one of the main aims was to examine differences across different cultural/language groups, limiting my confidence that they had reached a saturation of opinions. Authors should discuss why they got such a small sample.

3. One has to assume that reading a paper describing a text message intervention relates closely with actually experiencing the text message intervention. But what if it doesn’t? What if the needs and preferences of individuals differ significantly when they are in their natural drinking environments? This would lead authors to incorrectly jettison messages that could be helpful. This should be discussed.

4. Authors follow the principle that what is acceptable is the same as what is effective. With drinkers, however, part of behaviour change is creating awareness of discrepancy between what they currently do and what they should do. This naturally results in negative emotional response, which may be
important. Authors should discuss how user preference and effectiveness may not always match up.

5. Authors conclude that users did not like the goal setting question or the branching. Suggest a revised interpretation that users did not feel comfortable in committing to a vague and distant goal, and that goals should be contextualized to specific occasions. This is more consistent with known goal-setting theory and implementation intentions (see Golwitzer).

6. One of the very clear findings of the interviews is the need for tailoring. Authors discuss this but then state that they don’t have the resources to tailor an intervention, or make more dynamic dialogue. Authors can possibly spend some discussion on how (if they did have the resources) would tailor the intervention.

Discretionary Revisions:
7. Suggest authors look at Ranney R et al, J Adol Health, 2013, and discuss how their findings relate.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No