Reviewer’s report

Title: The need to modify physical activity messages to better speak to older African American women: a qualitative study

Version: 3 Date: 19 June 2015

Reviewer: Alice Fang Yan

Reviewer’s report:

This study explored attitudes of older African American women to widely disseminated public information pertaining to physical activity and aging.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract

The methods section needs to be clearly written to describe the “qualitative approach” employed in the study. For example, what was the sample size and age of the sample? How many focus groups were used? What software was used to analyze the data? What are the sources of “public information materials” in this study?

Statements in the results and conclusion section need to closely link to the aim stated earlier (“attitudes on physical activity and aging” among older African American women). Both the results and conclusion sections only mentioned “physical activity and exercise” and did not mention the concept of “aging”.

Background

1) First paragraph. Please list the variety of personal and socioenvironmental factors that influence physical activity behavior in this population [6-8]. I do not think the current literature was lacking for factors associated with inactivity among this group, as the author indicated.

2) The last paragraph of the background seems rather abrupt – introducing many new concepts, including culture values, belief systems, religious influences, life experiences and group identity, without further explanation and justification. Then, the author immediately stated that “little attention has been paid to exploring how older African American women perceive messages used to promote physical activity for older adults.”

3) I recommend the authors do more thorough work to justify their study aims. For example, what research gaps need to be filled by the study? What are the unique contributions of the study?

Methods

1) The justification of the sample size (n=10) was not mentioned.

2) The justification of using two different focus groups (a physically active group and a sedentary group) was not mentioned.
3) Since there are thousands of publicly available items related to physical activity, the authors need to justify why they are using only those three (data collection section).

4) What was the total number of messages being rated by participants? Could you give us some examples?

5) The author asked participants to use a scale from 1 to 5 to rate items in terms of clarity and content. Was this evaluation scale validated elsewhere?

Results
1) How did the author make the conclusion that the “exercise and physical activity” brochure was perceived to be the best, followed by the “be active your way” brochure. There has to be a clear procedure to rate and rank; this was lacking.

Discussion
1) The authors need to discuss the finding “Participants’ evaluation on the physical activity and exercise materials was found to be similar between the active and sedentary focus group” and explain why.

2) The authors need to discuss the small sample size and the fact that the convenience sample might bias the results.

3) The results section did not ask participants to rate messages on “belief system, religious and culture value, life experiences and group identify work.” I wonder why the author discusses this in the discussion section (line 300).

- Minor Essential Revisions

Discussion
1) Fourth paragraph of discussion section (line 294). Please list the “10 out of 12 studies”. What are those studies and corresponding references?

- Discretionary Revisions

Statistical analysis
1) The analysis plan seemed adequate.

Results
2) What were the codes “CBg-66 inactive” “LP-73 Inactive” in the text?

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

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