Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving engagement with healthcare in hepatitis C: a randomised controlled trial of a Peer Support intervention

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Reviewer: Paul Haber

Reviewer’s report:

This paper describes the first RCT of a peer worker intervention to support engagement of marginalised people into BBV health services, so far as I am aware. It is important as these services are expanding worldwide and evidence of their effectiveness is critical to understanding their value. The study is well designed and the analysis and reporting is generally clear. The usual care is a fairly cold distant referral, but this sits within the range of ‘usual care’ I think and is a valid comparator given the aim of the study is to test the benefit of the peer intervention. The limitation of an unblinded study is acknowledged and I think unavoidable. The paper is well written. There are a couple of abbreviations not defined eg LFU (I presume lost to follow up?)

I have only minor concerns:

The peer worker is key to these services my experience, but the peer intervention was not well described, nor was the peer training. What is that individual’s demographic profile and does it match that of your clients? What training is provided? What supervision? Is the person paid? Full-time or part-time?

I downloaded the additional file 2 and most of these questions were not answered there, but even so, this paper evaluates the benefit of an intervention that is unusual and novel. It must be described in more than three lines! I know the reader was referred to detailed descriptions elsewhere but a brief description might lengthen the paper a little but make it a complete piece of work. I would request this be added.

Minor points:

should cite Walsh et al 2006 as the first use of peer intervention for HCV (not my paper!)

could cite work by Treloar et al who were the second to report on this.

there are too many significant figures in the stats: eg 18.09% increase in engagement. 18% is quite sufficient!

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.
Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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