Reviewer’s report

Title: A systematic review of the efficacy of self-management programs for increasing physical activity in community-dwelling adults with acquired brain injury (ABI).

Version: 1 Date: 13 January 2015

Reviewer: Rebecca States

Reviewer’s report:

Comments to authors:
Overall this is a high quality review of a topic that is of questionable interest given the paucity of research in the area and diversity of studies that must be included. The review is conducted using very sound methodological procedures but I am not clear about the benefits of asking research questions that group such a wide range of health conditions together and allow for such a range of interventions. It might be more beneficial if tailored toward people with ABI who have solely physical disabilities, solely cognitive/memory difficulties, disabilities of a particular severity, or some such distinction. That said, the discussion does a good job of picking apart some of these issues, and could perhaps be previewed somehow in the introduction.

Minor essential revisions:
Line 1 and following:
The abstract should better highlight the range of intervention approaches that falls within the overall category or give some indication of the ways in which the authors group the interventions considered within the reviewed studies.

Line 36 and following:
Given that effective interventions are likely to vary depending on the long-term effects of an individual’s brain injuries, the authors should provide additional justification regarding why they should focus on the population of ABI as unified whole rather than on more specific subset(s) within it.

Line 112:
When describing the inclusion criteria, give further definition for ABI. For example, are brain injuries sustained during childhood such as those leading to cerebral palsy and development delay included? If not, why not? Is a particular severity of brain injury or duration of symptoms assumed? For example, are people who have had concussions included within this population?

Line 312:
“were quasi-randomized controlled trials” or “were NOT quasi-randomized controlled trials”?

Line 323 and following:
Another reason it’s difficult to summarize these studies is that the disabilities of the individuals involved must vary widely depending on their presentation and type of ABI. The difficulty of generalizing across types of disability presentations should be better addressed.

Line 363: Same issue as above. In discussing the limitations of this review, the authors should discuss the limitations created by grouping all types of ABI together.

Line 466:
Add something in the conclusions to reflect the diversity of the ABI population.

Discretionary revisions:
Line 228:
Should this read “Insert table 3 about here” as that’s where the outcome measures are shown?

Line 249:
In the sentence beginning, “Likewise, in stroke survivors,” alter to say “Likewise, in one study of stroke survivors”?

Line 272:
“was” should be “were”

Line 438: typo – “in as a component”

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.