**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Informing the development of online weight management interventions: A qualitative investigation of primary care patient perceptions

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 28 Jun 2017

**Reviewer:** Melanie Jay

**Reviewer's report:**

**Summary:**

This is a qualitative study of 20 primary care patients who were encouraged to use one of three publically available weight loss websites. They were then interviewed four weeks after to explore factors that could impact uptake and continued use of these sites for weight management. Overall, this paper is well-written and addresses and very interesting and important topic when considering implementation of these services within primary care settings.

My main critique of this paper is that the authors are missing some standard features necessary to determine the study was designed and executed in a rigorous manner. Please use the consolidated checklist using the link below as a guide:

Consolidated checklist for reporting qualitative studies

http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?type=supplementary&id=info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0143654.s003

For instance, several elements in the study design are not adequately reported including (See below for more detail)

1. Methodological orientation and theory

2. Whether you achieved data saturation

3. Whether or not you presented the data back to participants to validate findings (Participant checking)

4. The coding process
Abstract:

This is clearly written. You may want to include your sampling strategy and data analysis plan in the abstract itself.

Background:

Clear, concise, not major feedback. To what extent is lack of internet access a barrier to using the health interventions?

Methods:

Study Design and setting: Here it would be good to know what theoretical framework, if any, you used when designing the study.

Weight loss websites: Was evidence of effectiveness taken into consideration when choosing? You cited at least one study about Sparkpeople.com. Were there certain elements that you wanted (e.g. social support, tracking, etc)?

Participants:

In the general practice database search, how many practices were included? What do you know about the demographics of the wider population you were drawing from? What areas of the UK were they part of? This information would allow us to determine more about the target population.

Materials and procedures:

Where were the interviews conducted? Were the interviews in person or over the phone? How long did they last on average?

Data analysis:

What framework did you use? Thematic analysis is part of several frameworks such as grounded theory, content analysis, discourse analysis, etc. More detail about the coding process would be helpful—for instance, did the 2 coders code separately and then meet to resolve differences once the coding guide was set?
Did you explore differences between genders or age?

Was data saturation reached?

Results:

Overall, the results are interesting and fun to read. It was difficulty for me to tell which of the headers represented themes vs. categories/codes. Are each of the bolded elements a theme? There seem to be themes/subthemes that weave in throughout all the stages (e.g. as personalization, usefulness of information, effort, motivation). In reading it, some of the "themes" in bold seem more like categories—such as "tracking features" and "email reminders." They do not seem like themes on their own but rather categories that illustrate the themes and subthemes. It might be useful to highlight which themes are common across all stages and which are stage-specific.

How were the stages were developed and outlined? Did it come from the data and participants themselves or have others described these stages?

Line 277: "This again shows the strong influence of personal preferences...." You may want to refer to the last time in the results that this came up—I did not remember reading it and had to go back to look for it a couple pages back. If personal preferences are a theme that weaves throughout all the stages, this should be made explicit.

Stage 4: theme of effort—this seems similar to "time and commitment" in stage 3. It seems like there are some similar themes in each of the stages.

In older vs. younger adults in rural areas, did you find or explore whether internet access itself and presence of a computer or smartphone were barriers to use? Did any issues of computer literacy come up?

Discussion:

Well-written.

One of the strengths highlighted in this paper is the target population of "older adults (although not all of your participants were older -in fact, I would describe them as middle-aged since nobody was older than 65, standard retirement age).". Is there anything that prior literature tells us about weight management barriers and technological barriers (or lack thereof) in this population that are similar or different from your findings?
How representative to you think that this sample is to the greater rural primary care population in the UK?

Table S1: This is good information to have. It would be good to know what websites Tang et al. were evaluating.

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

No

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

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