Reviewer’s report

Title: Preventing stress-related ill health among newly registered nurses by supporting engagement in proactive behaviors: Development and feasibility testing of a behavior change intervention

Version: 2 Date: 07 Nov 2017

Reviewer: Emma King

Reviewer’s report:

I thought that this was an interesting article and I note the responses that you have already made to the recommendations of previous reviewers. I have some minor comments which are mainly for clarification:

Line 86 - could you include any data on stress levels in newly qualified nurses outside Sweden? Even if just to say that these levels are similar. It would help you bring in an international aspect and make this more applicable to a wider audience.

Line 120 - the review of interventions mentioned - is this a review that you have done as part of the study or one that has been previously published? Make explicit or reference if the latter.

Line 126 - 'making' contact with peers rather than 'taking'?

Line 134 - which country was the study of 1210 nurses carried out in?

Line 145-148 I think that your hypothesis could do with some clarification. 'The risk of' seems redundant, could you not just say that 'stress related ill health among...' It is also unclear what you are referring to by the 'effect' - I presume it is the effect of increasing their engagement in proactive behaviours, but it can also be read as the effect of the stress-related ill health. So this could do with some clarification.

It also seems as if you jump about between talking of occupational tasks, role clarity etc. as either an input or an output. In line 130 it reads as if these are outputs of proactive behaviours, but your hypothesis implies that these are implicated in bringing about proactive behaviours. I appreciate that this is not easy to unpick, as you demonstrate in Figure 1. But equally it will be hard to evaluate something if it is unclear whether it is the result of proactive behaviours, or something that leads to them.

Line 148 - how do you intend to measure stress in the full trial?

163 - You mention further down that some newly qualified nurses have previously worked at their current workplace. Could you clarify in PARTICIPANTS whether nurses returning to work after an absence (e.g. in a return to practice program) were included, or were they all in fact newly qualified for the first time?
165 - a sentence on how nurses were recruited would be helpful (e.g. on a notice board, through course tutors)

166 - I would change this to 'and in writing' to avoid any confusion with text messages.

169 - I would take line 178-180 and put it right up the front so that the reader is aware what interviews were carried out before you start talking about the analysis.

238 and 253 - some more clarity would be gone on the developmental timeline. So the intervention was used twice before with groups of nurses, but these are NOT the same nurses that you did your feasibility study on? Could you also clarify why one group got 2x2hrs an one got 4x2hrs?

266 - Where did your 70% come from? Was there a sample size calculation. You mention a lot later on (in the discussion?) that a previous review had identified this as a suitable number, but I think it would be good to say that earlier.

316 - 'to evaluate' rather than evaluation?

349 - how long had the other 5% of the sample worked there? Some idea of range would be useful.

405-406 - 'REQUIRED to work ON the clinical ward' might sound better.

463 - 'focus on reducing...' rather than focused.

469 - what is an effortful behaviour? Is this the same as a proactive one?

525 - 'answer the question of whether a full scale...'

Overall I think the literature used is good, although as mentioned earlier I feel the authors could make more international relevance just by a small amount of work in the introduction, as at the moment it is quite focused on the Nordic countries. Whilst not imperative for the data presented in this paper, it might just help to open it up to a wider audience.

Figures and tables look good and agree with placement in the text.

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