

Reviewer's report

Title: Is it worth investing in mental health promotion and prevention of mental illness? A systematic review of the evidence from economic evaluations

Version: 1 **Date:** 24 July 2007

Reviewer: Eva Jane Llopis

Reviewer's report:

General comment:

The paper shows it has been developed in a scholarly manner, the methodology is sound, the outcomes well described and the conclusions are relevant to the field of mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention. Such review is welcome and it is anticipated that it can support decision making and further development in defining the contents of research proposals.

Answers to specific reviewing questions:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

It is an important question and it is well defined in the paper.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Yes, methods are well described. Some suggestions as to replication of the work are included in the comments written onto the paper itself (see enclosed document). Some of these recommendations would ensure even more that replication of the work was possible.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Data are sound and well controlled. Suggestions are proposed to clarify and provide useful information to those working with mental health promotion and mental disorder prevention, who might be interested in this paper and who might not be familiar with economic terms. It is suggested for example to include some lines on the efficacy of each intervention study included and described; to indicate more clearly which are the studies considered to be of good quality; to highlight in an easy manner, whether it is in the results or in the conclusions section, what are actually the gains of such interventions were they to be implemented (given of course the caveats described). The paper as it stands now is very good but simplifying some of its conclusions and summarizing them for the reader might make the results more accessible to those who have not expertise on the economics area but who might be very interested in knowing what such interventions cost and what one can get out of it (i.e., dollar gain by

dollar spent). Although it is understood that this is difficult to ascertain, it is suggested that such global conclusion, however conservative, is clearly stated.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes and it is well referenced

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes, conclusions are balanced and supported. A bit more specification in the distinction between risk factors and depression/suicide section might be needed in the discussion section as to strengthen both areas (which are presented separately in the table and results sections). At the moment both seemed somehow mixed (as commented in the paper).

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes. However it would be advisable to include in the abstract as much as possible some statement on the cost-benefit ratios (in general better) to provide some clear global conclusion rather than a separated report of each result of each study included in the review. Although such general figure or conclusion might prove difficult to obtain, it would make the paper and its results much stronger and relevant in the field, would ensure quotation of the work (which now given its separation of outcomes does not invite to easy quoting), and would be unfortunate as the work invested in the paper proves very valuable. (See also similar comments in point 3 above)

7. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes the paper is well written and generally easy to understand. Some sentences proved difficult to follow, and suggestions are included where re-writing or further specification would be welcome

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

All specific comments to the paper are included in the PDF file.

The recommendation is to publish this paper, when some MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS have been undertaken. Especially this refers to:

- 1) Revision of comments in introduction section and update of general references on prevention-promotion systematic reviews and meta-analyses especially for depression and suicide prevention
- 2) Definitions of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention as inclusion criteria and more specification in describing trial retrieval and inclusion criteria, as this is essential to replication (see comments in enclosed paper in the methods section)
- 3) Inclusion of a clear global conclusion on cost benefits or cost effectiveness, to the extent which is possible and given all mentioned caveats, that is easy to

quote (this can be put in a box or in italics etc, as mentioned in above comments, points 3 and 6).

- 4) Short line providing a summary of the mental health outcomes of each described intervention, before relating cost-benefits.
- 5) Clear indication of which are considered good quality studies to help the reader (i.e., in addition to mentioning the issue, please indicate which ones the authors mean as good quality studies)
- 6) Inclusion of at least one reference where indicated in the text (this has been indicated where assertions are made but might not be considered sound unless referenced)
- 7) Inclusion of reference lists specifically for finally included and excluded studies
- 8) Inclusion of number of the reference in all the studies in table 1 (where now only study author and year are mentioned and it is difficult to find in the reference list which is number based)
- 9) In addition the reviewer would very much welcome (to the discretion of the authors) that all other comments included in the text of the manuscript, are taken into consideration.

LEVEL OF INTEREST

In the opinion of the reviewer, this is an article of importance in its field

QUALITY OF WRITTEN ENGLISH

Although it is noted that one of the authors is a native speaker, some sentences proved difficult to follow. It is recommended that where indicated, sentences are revised (this is only the case in very few sentences). (Needs some language corrections before being published)

STATISTICAL REVIEW

Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician?

In the reviewer's opinion, given the simplicity of the review and no use of statistics (rather than reporting what others have done) it does not seem necessary that a statistician reviews the work.

However I am not an expert in economic evaluation so I am not certain that the economic guidelines used to conversion of currencies etc. is the most recommended one.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

I declare that I have no competing interests

