Reviewer's report

Title: Randomized controlled trial on cardiovascular risk management by practice nurses supported by self-monitoring

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Reviewer: janneke noordman

Reviewer's report:

Comments to the authors:
Interesting paper! The abstract and result section are clear. Allocation, screening and statistical analysis also seem appropriate.
I have a couple of questions and comments, see below. I hope my comments will help you to improve the paper.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. Background: The background is very short and needs more body. More information about practice nurses is necessary, also in international perspective. For example, previous research shows that practice nurses do not relieve the workload of GPs (as is suggested), but seem to have strengthen primary care, especially for chronically ill patients.
2. Besides, you do not refer to the “Prevention Consultation” (PreventieConsult) which are specifically developed for cardiovascular risk management (among others) in the Netherlands, and could be performed by either GPs or practice nurses in primary care (see the Dutch NHG standard PreventieConsult and articles about this subject, for example: Assendelft et al., “Bridging the gap between public health and primary care in prevention of cardiometabolic diseases: background of and experiences with the Prevention Consultation in The Netherlands” Family Practice 2012). What does your study/intervention add to the already existing knowledge/ interventions?
3. More important, your research question is not quit clear. You should state an actual question and describe intervention and usual care more clearly. I do not understand what you mean by: “intensive, integrated lifestyle and drug treatment”. And what is usual care as used in the Anglo-Dutch-Scandinavian health care system? I understand that a detailed description of intervention and control group should be outlined in the method section, but some information is useful in the background.
4. Method: In general: The methods seem appropriate, but also raise some questions. The study consists of a control group (usual care) and one intervention group with intensive counselling and self-monitoring. Why did you choose for only one intervention group? Now you do not know if the intensive counselling OR the self-monitoring OR the combination was not efficient. Perhaps one or two elements were efficient, but you could not determine which.
At least you should mention this in your limitation section.

5. Eligibility criteria for participant & recruitment: Eligible criteria for patients is well described, but not for practice nurses. How where the practice nurses recruited? Are all practice nurses from the participating general practices included? Where were the practices located? Is the sample representative?

6. Intervention: The practice nurses had followed a specially developed training program. Who developed the training program (part of SPRING?) and who trained the practice nurses? In this section and Table 2 you mention that the counselling is based on motivational interviewing techniques, Stage of change and Minimal Intervention Strategy. You should explain these techniques and give some evidence why those are important. Perhaps you could also mention something about these techniques in the background.

7. Discussion: Comparison with existing literature: This section also needs more body (see also comments ‘background’, include ‘Prevention Consultation’). For example, you state that “the positive effect that was achieved in both study groups (...) corresponds with previous research on this matter”. You could go in more detail, especially since these studies also used motivational interviewing techniques. Also, compare the outcomes on self-monitoring and/or intensive counselling on cardiovascular risk management with outcomes of previous research.

Minor Essential Revisions:

8. Background: The study is about practice nurses, but when you describe the term SPRING you mention Nurse Practitioners instead of practice nurses. These are different professionals.

9. Recruitment: Please rephrase the following sentence: “65 is the maximum age for this risk calculator, so this age was used also for older participants”.

10. Table 3: level of education, divided into level 1 to 4. Please explain the levels or describe otherwise.

11. Conclusion: English writing in this section is not appropriate, please rephrase. For example, “risk of cardiovascular disease was not greater in the intervention group”. I suggest that you ask a native English speaker to review this section (or your whole paper).

Discretionary Revisions:

12. Results: What does Figure 2 add? Table 4 seem to provide similar information.

13. In the discussion section it becomes clear that you did have some hypotheses (“decreased use of medication in the intervention group was expected”). It would be nice if you state your hypotheses in the background section.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests