Author's response to reviews

Title: Analysis of the psychological impact of a vascular risk factor intervention: results from a cluster randomized controlled trial in Australian general practice

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Dr Marienke van Middelkoop
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Dear Dr van Middelkoop

Re: MS:4060730510787094

Analysis of the psychological impact of a vascular risk factor intervention: results from a cluster randomized controlled trial in Australian general practice

Thank you for the opportunity to address the additional comments provided by the first peer reviewer and for considering the revised manuscript for publication in BMC Family Practice. We have noted that the second reviewer, Davorka Vrdoljak, was satisfied with our previous changes and recommended the article for publication.

The manuscript has been revised based on the comments provided by reviewer one and a point-by-point response (in italics) to her concerns follow.

Reviewer: Winifred Paulis

Page 12: “Those who were lost from the study were more likely to be overweight (P=0.04) but were otherwise similar to those completing the study.”

Were they also not different on the K-10 score? I think it is important to note this, since you do not correct for missing values and the decrease in K-10 score at follow-up could theoretically be explained by the lost-to-follow-ups.

Those who were lost to follow up following baseline analysis had similar K10 scores to those who completed the study. The only statistically significant difference between those who were lost from the study and those who continued was that those who were lost were more likely to be overweight.

I think a small paragraph in the limitations section in the discussion describing the possible influence of the missings would benefit the manuscript.

The following paragraph has been added to the discussion on page 16.

“The characteristics of the participants who were lost to follow-up were similar to those remaining in the study except they were more likely to be overweight. However, due to missing values only 536 participants were included in the multi-level linear regression model. It is possible that those with missing values had a higher distress level compared to those who completed the questionnaire, therefore biasing the result towards a lower K10 score at 12 months.”
I still feel that the variance explained by the model (42%) is not that useful information. Can you please explain the importance of this result? Otherwise, I would leave it out.

This has been deleted from the results and the discussion.

Page 17, Conclusion: “This study confirms that we are not unintentionally increasing the psychological distress of our patients.”
I read this sentence as: not unintentionally, therefore we are probably intentionally increasing….etc. I think the authors want to make a careful conclusion. I agree that the conclusion should not be too strong. However, please rephrase this sentence.

This has been rephrased as follows (see page 17):
“This study confirms that this process does not adversely impact on the psychological distress of our patients.”

Yours sincerely

Suzanne McKenzie

Associate Professor Suzanne McKenzie