Reviewer's report

Title: The COACH prompting system to assist older adults with dementia through handwashing: An efficacy study

Version: 2 Date: 16 September 2008

Reviewer: Marilynne A Hebert

Reviewer's report:

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS
All have been addressed.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
Initial recommendation was to break the long text passages into paragraphs that each contain one main idea. The authors have responded that the majority of paragraphs are less than a page long.

This response has missed the point of the suggestion. Shorter paragraphs containing single ideas are easier to read and follow the logic - general good writing technique. For example (page 11) the following information is presented as one continuous paragraph (breaks are reviewer's suggestions):

Participants and Ethics/Consent Process
This study was reviewed and approved by the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute’s Research Ethics Board (REB). Potential participants were identified by the staff at the long-term care (LTC) facility in Toronto, Canada where the study took place. Informed consent to participate was obtained in writing (using a the consent form approved by the REB) from the participants’ substitute decision makers, after the study was described to them using an information sheet and informal interview.

Participants had to meet the following inclusion/exclusion criteria: over the age of 65 years of age, no history of violence, fluent in English, can hear normal levels of speech, exhibit no severe motor impairments, and have moderate-to-severe dementia. Level of dementia was determined through the administration of the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE), an assessment instrument that is commonly used to estimate the level of cognitive impairment in adults [26].

Typically, participants are separated into four categories of impairment based on his/her MMSE score: no impairment (30-26 points), mild (25-20 points), moderate (19-10 points), and severe (9-0 points). Each participant’s dementia level was scored using the MMSE before the start and upon completion of the trials.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
With respect to the study being referred to as an efficacy study, intervention
study and clinical trial, it is to the authors' advantage to decide what type of study this is. Study cohesiveness (question, data collection, data analysis and reporting results) depends on choosing a design and following through.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.