Reviewer's report

Title: Feasibility of a controlled trial aiming to prevent excessive pregnancy-related weight gain in primary health care

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Reviewer: Mireille van Poppel

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper describes the feasibility of an intervention aimed at preventing pregnancy-related weight problems. It is an important topic and I am much in favor of reporting on feasibility aspects of interventions. This is useful information when developing future interventions with the same objective, and also for understanding the results of an intervention. However, the authors may need to discuss their results in more depth, and provide more information on reasons for refusing the participate and for drop-out. The paper is generally well written, although the English might need some minor improvements. The last is hard to judge, since I am not a native speaker myself.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Results: recruitment and participation

In figure 2, the number of women refusing to participate in the study are given, as well as the number dropping out from the study. Although this information is important, it would be even more informative if reasons for not wanting to participate and reasons for drop out were given in more detail. For instance, what were reasons behind the label ‘this study’? Something related to the study I gather, but what exactly. And were, for instance, time restraints important reasons for not participating? For designing future studies, this is important to know.

Realisation of the intervention:

the authors scored whether the intervention sessions took place or not. It would be interesting to get insight in the content of the sessions as well. Was the counselling intervention given as planned? Were all topics discussed? did women receive feedback as planned, ect.

Discussion:

The discussion is a bit flat. It is not enought to state that drop-out reasons were plausible. Please indicate whether the results are an indication that things need to be adjusted, and in what way. Same for obtaining NAF: what were the problems and can they be solved?
I would suggest adding a paragraph on what you have learned from this study regarding feasibility. Not only things that went wrong, but also things that went very well need to be indicated. And provide directions for future studies.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Background:
first paragraph: "Although the average postpartum weight retention is quite small, a subgroup of women retains remarkable amounts of weight after pregnancy." Please indicate the amount gained on average (...kg), and the size of the subgroup (..%).

Methods:
Among the exclusion criteria, otherwise problematic pregnancy is mentioned. This is rather vague. Please specify a bit more.
Same for tiredness and fatigue: is this any tiredness and fatigue, or only tiredness and fatigue hindering activities in daily living?

Discussion:
It is stated that it might be reasonable to provide group exercise after delivery instead of during pregnancy. This may be the case if only feasibility and time restraints of participants it taken into account. It may not be the case when the effect on weight gain and weight retention is the objective. Perhaps other ways of getting pregnant women to exercise are needed?

For a rather short paper on feasibility, the paper has many tables and figures. I would suggest removing Table 2, and adding a bit of information from the table to the text.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Perhaps the title is not completely correct, since the study was not only on weight gain, but also weight loss after delivery. The objective of the study was perhaps twofold: prevent excessive weight gain during pregnancy and promote weight loss after delivery. Perhaps 'reducing post-partum weight retention' would be more suitable, because weight gain during pregnancy is strongly related to weight retention after delivery.

The authors use the term "study proper" to indicate future larger trial. I am not familiar with this term. Please check whether this is the correct term.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have
responded to the major compulsory revisions

**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.