Author's response to reviews

Title: The effectiveness of the Screening Inventory of Psychosocial Problems (SIPP) in cancer patients treated with radiotherapy: design of a cluster randomised controlled trial

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Dear editors,

Enclosed you will find our revised paper, “The effectiveness of the Screening Inventory of Psychosocial Problems (SIPP) in cancer patients treated with radiotherapy: design of a cluster randomised controlled trial”. We have changed your comments accordingly.

About 30% of all cancer patients report psychosocial distress. Only 10% of these patients receive psychosocial care, because it is still underdiagnosed by medical staff for different reasons. Early detection of psychosocial problems in oncology settings is important to reduce symptoms of distress and to improve quality of life and medical outcomes of cancer patients. The Screening Inventory of Psychosocial Problems (SIPP) is a short, validated self-reported questionnaire to identify psychosocial problems in Dutch cancer patients. The one-page 24-item questionnaire assesses physical complaints, psychological complaints and social and sexual problems. Very little is known about the effects of using the SIPP in consultation settings. Our study aims are to test the hypotheses that using the SIPP (a) may contribute to adequate referral to relevant psychosocial caregivers, (b) should facilitate communication between radiotherapists and cancer patients about psychosocial distress and (c) may prevent underdiagnosis of early symptoms reflecting psychosocial problems. This paper presents the design of a cluster randomised controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of using the SIPP in cancer patients treated with radiotherapy (Trial registration: NCT00859768). The Dutch Cancer Society (KWF) funded this study (grant number 2008-4008).
Making this study protocol accessible for an international public may help to improve the standard of clinical trials.

We declare that the paper has neither been published previously, nor is currently under consideration for publication by any other journal. All authors have contributed to the development of the study, or the report.

Thank you for publishing our article in BMC Cancer.

On behalf of the co-authors,
sincerely,

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