Reviewer’s report

Title: A multicenter randomized controlled trial of aftercare services for Severe Mental Illness: study protocol

Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2012

Reviewer: Bernd Puschner

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As this seems to be the second round of peer review already I will only give a few comments, all of them mandatory:

1) The authors should see to (again) that the protocol adheres to CONSORT guidelines

2) Please be clear about number ingredients of the intervention and their contents. E.g. on p. 4 it says “It has three main parts…” followed by a description of 4 parts. Later on (p. 13), the description of the intervention has different parts again, including “a program for rehabilitation” which has not been mentioned before.

3) p. 8: Please specify how the Iranian Ministry of Health can have designed that trial (p. 8). What was the authors’ role in this? Are they employed by the MoH?

4) Aims and endpoints should be the same. E.g. there is an apparent conflict between “This study aims at evaluating the clinical effectiveness…” (p. 7, overall aims”) and primary outcome length of stay (p. 11).

5) p. 11, last item: “direct cost-effectiveness…” cannot be a secondary outcome measure. The authors should specify how they will collect costs.

6) In general methods appear weak, e.g.:
   a) What is the rationale for the calculation of sample size (Cohen)?
   b) The primary outcome is LOS and not a repeated measure and thus cannot be used in repeated measures analysis.
   c) I doubt that “qualitative” data can be compared by a chi square test.
   d) ICERS per se cannot be calculated from cost data alone, but express the relation between cost and outcome.
   e) Be clear on the randomization procedure. It is not possible that “the patients were then divided… by the psychologist” (p. 10).

7) Writing is not acceptable. Just to give a few examples:
   a) “Therefore, aftercare setting … “ (p. 2).
   b) “Aftercare services were included treatment …” (p. 2).
   c) “Those who did not consent… was conducted…” (p. 9).
   d) “… questionnaire … designed by research team.” (p. 11).
e) “Also, the trial sought to understand…” (p. 15; nothing has been understood yet).

f) “Determining… with help policy makers in ministry of health for further planning.” (p. 15; you might want to address a wider audience).

I recommend that the authors enlist the aid of an English native speaker to improve writing.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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