Reviewer's report

Title: The feasibility of a single-blinded fast-track pragmatic randomised controlled trial of a complex intervention for breathlessness in advanced disease.

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Reviewer: Jolanda Habraken

Reviewer's report:

This paper is very well written and addresses an important topic. Indeed, palliative care needs high quality research (especially on care for patients with non-malignant conditions) and this paper addresses a promising innovative combination of research approaches.

There are however some concerns I would like to address:

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. On page 12, the authors state that ‘the service model for BIS was different for malignant and non-malignant conditions due to the differing disease trajectories, such that separate RCT protocols for evaluation of BIS for malignant and non-malignant conditions would be required.’ Since this feasibility study focused solely on patients with a non-malignant condition, I would like the authors to explain more to what extent this finding has an effect on the feasibility of BIS in malignant conditions. Are the results from this study generalisable to BIS in malignant conditions and to what extent?

2. The authors explain how blinding and unblinding took place in the study. My concern however, is that of the quality of the qualitative interviews when the respondents were told not to speak about topics that would result in unblinding. To what extent did this affect the interviews? Did respondents feel in any way restricted in talking to the interviewer? How was the relationship between interviewer and respondent affected by this? Did it introduce more distance between them than would normally be the case? I think this is an important methodological issue that deserves more attention in the paper.

Discretionary Revisions

3. A suggestion to add moments of blinding / unblinding to box 3.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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