Author's response to reviews

Title: Sexual assault resistance education for university women: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial (SARE trial)

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Emily Crow, Executive Editor *BMC Women’s Health*
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Dear Editor:

We believe our Study Protocol manuscript (Sexual assault resistance education for university women: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial) is suitable for publication in *BMC Women’s Health* because it closely matches the scope of the journal, namely addressing “the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and women, with a particular focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health of women.”

Our ongoing, long-term, randomized controlled trial, which the manuscript describes, is an evaluation of a sexual assault resistance education program, designed to reduce sexual assault among young women in the first year of university. The theoretically and empirically sound education program has been shown to have short-term efficacy in previous pilot studies. The importance of reducing sexual assault among university women cannot be overstated, as it’s estimated that as many as 1 in 4 female students are victims of rape or attempted rape during the relatively short time they are enrolled in post-secondary education. The associated physical and mental health effects are extensive and the social and economic costs are staggering. Even a small increase in the ability of women to resist sexual assault will result in a substantial improvement in the mental and physical health of women.

A systematic review of the literature confirms that despite the size of the ‘at risk’ population and the seriousness of health impacts of rape and sexual assault, a rigorous randomized controlled trial of a rape resistance education program has not been conducted – ours will be the first. Therefore, we believe our Study Protocol will make a novel contribution to *BMC Women’s Health*. Documentation showing major peer-reviewed agency grant funding and ethics approval have been uploaded as a Comments file.

Kindest regards,

Misha Eliasziw, Ph.D.