Reviewer's report

Title: Improving question formulation for use in evidence appraisal in a tertiary care setting: a randomised controlled trial

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Version: 1 Date: 29 Oct 2001

Reviewer: Prof Jos Kleijnen

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

1. This is an interesting article about improving question formulation for use in evidence appraisal. I am not aware of similar evaluations other than those mentioned by the authors. It concerns a small randomised trial.

Major items
2. Throughout the text it could be made clearer whether p-values concern within group comparisons or between group comparisons.
3. The objective of this study as formulated by the authors under 'Materials and methods' lacks a description of the comparator. This does not look good in an article that addresses this very topic.
4. Under 'Statistical methods' I don't think it is helpful to provide statistical tests for checking comparability of the groups at baseline. (Because you have just randomised, a chance procedure, it does not make sense to calculate a p-value which gives a probability that the differences found or more extreme differences, under the null hypothesis of no difference, could have occurred by chance. That probability is per definition 1.)
5. At the end of the same section, it would be helpful to get more details about how the intention to treat analysis was performed. The second paragraph of the results section suggests that information from those lost to follow up was not included in the analysis. I think this is not an ITT analysis then.

Minor items
6. The last sentence of the second paragraph under 'Outcome assessment at baseline' doesn't read well, I can't make sense of the word 'either'. Also the following sentence doesn't read well, can't make sense of the word 'group'. Also the next sentence doesn't read well, what do you mean with 'in about 12 of 17 questions'?
7. One typo a) 'Materials and methods', subsection 'Outcomes' it should read dimensions in stead of dimension.
Competing interests:

None declared.