Reviewer's report

Title: Values Clarification in a decision aid about fertility preservation: does it add to information provision? Two randomized experiments with healthy participants

Version: 3 Date: 30 April 2014

Reviewer: James Dolan

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done a nice job revising the manuscript to address the concerns raised on the previous reviews. However, there are still several additional issues that I think need to be addressed.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The results are presented in a confusing manner.

Currently the results are presented for a mixture of a priori and post hoc groups of study participants. As a result, it is difficult for readers to interpret what the results mean in the overall context of the study. Since both experiments being reported were randomized trials, I think the best approach would be to follow the usual rules and conduct an intention to treat analysis using the original groups as the primary study outcome. The sub-group analyses based on actual usage of the VCE can still be presented but as secondary analyses that were not part of the original experimental plan. Presentation of the results of these two sets of analyses should be presented separately and the differences clearly noted.

2. The conclusion that the difference in DC between women who used the VCE is due to selection bias is not supported by the data.

From the data presented it is not possible to determine if the improvement in DC seen in the women who used the VCE is a true effect of using the VCE or not and I think the results should be interpreted accordingly. This is one instance of a post-hoc sub-group analysis I alluded to in my first comment. As such the results should be interpreted very carefully.

3. The data reported regarding the 2nd experiment DC results appear to be different in the text and Table 2.

The text reports that there were no significant differences in DCS or any subscales but the Table suggests otherwise.

4. The results reported in Tables 1 and 2 need to be identified more clearly.

Currently it is difficult to discern which group comparisons were done and if all comparisons are being reported. I think this is the result of the mixture of primary and secondary analyses that I described in my first comment.
Discretionary revisions

1. It would be helpful to include a sentence summarizing the implications of the study findings in the abstract.

2. On page 5, the sentence that starts on line 7: “One scenario based study…” could be revised to state that prior studies have found mixed results more effectively.

3. On page 6, the last sentence starting with “Based on considerations…” is quite long and complex and should be revised.

4. The effects on experiment one of the significant difference in desire for future children between the intervention and the control group should be discussed.

5. It would be easier to interpret the time data if it were converted to minutes (as reported in the text).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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