Reviewer's report

Title: Protocol of the Home-Based Older People's Exercise (HOPE) trial: a pilot randomised controlled trial comparing a home-based exercise intervention for frail older people with usual care.

Version: 1 Date: 26 April 2011

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

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In general, I think the authors should reconsider their choice of the short name of HOPE. It has already been chosen if one goes to Google it. The scientific community and patients will be confused by having two different trials try to use the same short form name. It would also help if the authors provided a list of short forms used in the protocol. This reviewer did not find all of them defined and they would likely not be common to most readers.

The pages were numbered form 1 to 19.
1. P(age) 2, p(aragraph) 2, l(ine) 9. The short form commonly used is [EQ-5D], ie, with a hyphen rather than without. Also P 10, p 3, l 2,3.
2. P 3, p 2, l 5. In what sense if [significant] being used here? If this is statistically significant, then it can be left although it might be better to put [statistically] in front of it. If not, then replace it by a word like [important].
3. P 3, p 3, l 4. Suggest dropping [in order] in front of [to] as the words are redundant in English. Also P 7, p 2, l 6. Also P 8, p 1, l 3; p 2, l 8. Also P 9, p 1, l 1. Also P 11, p 2, l 6. Also P 12, p 3, l 3,4.
4. P 3, p 4, l 1. Suggest replacing [recent] by [2009] so its date is always known whenever this is read, while recent will change with time.
5. P 4, p 3. What is the rationale for 12 weeks of intervention?
6. P 4, p 5, l 1. Since the word [older] is listed here, was any minimum age needed to be frail? Or should the word [older] be dropped? I have known people in the 40s and 50s who might have benefitted from such a set of exercises!
8. P 9, p 4. Suggest that the allocation ratio (presumably 1:1) be inserted in one of these sentences.
9. P 9, p 5 ff. All of the outcome measures should have a brief description of them such as their min and max values, how they are interpreted and the study
relevant measurement properties that the authors are using in the study. If there is a published minimum clinically important difference (MCID) then that could also be quoted. Saying that they are valid and reliable is not good enough.

10. P 10, p 4. What will you be looking for to use in CE analysis and how will you judge whether the collection is feasible?

11. P 10, p 6, l 4. Why are you adjusting for baseline values? Since you are randomizing the allocation, these are likely due to chance and these ANCOVA analyses most likely will have more variation than the outcomes unadjusted unless the baseline and outcome values have correlation above 0.5. Reporting both ways will make sense to detect which would have the smaller variation for future planning.

12. P 11, p 2. Since the sample size was not justified, it does not make sense to test for significant differences. However, confidence intervals and variation estimation do make sense for planning the future trial.


14. P 13, p 5. Provide the date of registration, as well as the date the first patient was randomized and when the study was completed if these have happened.

15. P 14, p 1, l 8. Why not list the last names of [Derek] and [Christine] like you have done earlier?

A random sample of 10 R(eference)s was chosen to check for accuracy of citation. Trials tries to publish ALL authors.


17. P 15, R 6, l 2. The CD number is missing.

18. P 15, R 8, l 1. Add the authors: [Reeder BA, Marshall JD] in place of [et al].

19. P 15, R 9 appears to be correct.

20. P 15, R 11, l 1. Add the authors: [Fried LP, Cutler GB Jr., Walston JD] in place of [et al].


22. P 15, R 18, l 1. Add the authors: [Multrie N, Hillis WS, MacIntyre PD] in place of [et al].


24. P 15, R 23. The author group should be listed first as [The EuroQol Group: EuroQol-a new ...].


26. P 16, Week 4 and 7. The colours [blue] and [green] do not show up on black and white printed copies, so another designation should be attempted.

27. P 17, column 2, l 1 for Set graded tasks. Suggest spelling out [reps].

28. P 18, 19. In appendix 1 photos. Was permission given by the subjects to
publish these photos?