Reviewer's report

Title: Short-term psychotherapeutic treatment in adolescents with non-suicidal self-injury - A randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 29 July 2013

Reviewer: Sean Perrin

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My specific comments are below:

1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis?

This is a well designed study that will more than adequately address the stated hypotheses.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?

The following information is missing from the manuscript:

The authors need to say how IQ<80 was assessed.

It is not clear if the authors attempted to match the first post-treatment assessment points between the two groups in terms of duration since baseline assessment.

It does not seem logical or clinically safe that the therapists should be blinded to the information collected from the initial (baseline) assessment. It would be of great importance to the therapist to be effective to know the scores from the measures, the history etc. This sentence/section needs further clarification/justification.

3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?

The planned analyses are appropriate to the design and hypotheses.

4. Is the writing acceptable?

The writing is acceptable. Suggested changes are as follows:

King's College London is one phrase, not "Kings College, London" as currently appears in the text (page 5, para 2).

The final sentence on page 5 should read "but a few of them [include percentage in parentheses]..."

On page 6 it should read, "The main outcome of the trial is a clinically significant reduction....."
The very next sentence should read, "Secondary outcome criteria are a reduction in symptoms of depression as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) [23] and increases in self-reported well-being and self-esteem as measured by the KIDSCREEN [24] and Self-Esteem Scales (SES) [25] respectively."

Primary hypothesis should read, "Significantly more adolescents in the CDP group than the TAU group will experience a clinically significant reduction in the frequency of non-suicidal self-injurious behaviours."

On page 6, should read "The potential participants and their families..." and "Boys and girls aged between 12 and 17 years with at least 5 prior acts of cutting,....."

Top of page 7, should read, "The last NSSI must have occurred within the last month at the time of screening for the study. All adolescents were required to provide written informed consent to participate in the study, and for those under 16 years of age, written consent also had to be provided by the parents/care-givers/legal substitute."

Bottom of page 7, the word "postline" should be changed to "post-treatment" wherever the former is used throughout the manuscript. Also remove the phrase "supposed to be" from the following the second to last sentence in the final paragraph.

"Data Assessment" should be in bold as the other headings.

On page 8, the term "socio-biographic anamnesis" needs to be replaced with "sociodemographic interview"

Page 12, the correct phrasing is "intent to treat"

Page 12, the sentence should read "Clinically significant improvement is defined as a reduction of 50% in the frequency of NSSI’s." The remainder of the paragraph needs rewording for correct English usage.

Throughout the manuscript and particularly in the Discussion section, the authors need to have a native English speaker read and offer suggestions on correct usage.