Reviewer's report

Title: A randomised trial of adaptive pacing therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, graded exercise, and specialist medical care for chronic fatigue syndrome (PACE): Statistical analysis plan

Version: 1 Date: 9 April 2013

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

Reviewer's report:

The authors of this SAP should consider having a section that defines all short forms used in this document. Many are not obvious such as MH&N and so should be defined. The references cited are not in the Trials suggested format.

1. Page 2, paragraph 6. Include the date of registration as well as the date the first patient was randomized using a common defined date format. The date formats in the manuscript are not currently consistent.

2. Page 5, paragraph 4, line 6. Specify the date format. See page 13, paragraph 2 where a different format is used.

3. Page 6, paragraph 1, lines 5 and 6. Delete [to be] as it is now published.

4. Page 6 and 36. Consider putting all the Reference(s) in the same location.

5. Page 6 and 36 ff. Trials likes to publish the first 30 authors before using [et al], so many of these Rs need to be revised. A random sample of the Rs listed here have been checked for citation accuracy. Trials does not use [p] as part of the citation.

6. Page 6, Reference 1. Insert (9044) after [349].


8. Page 6, Reference 4, line 2. Insert (9668) after [373].


10. Page 6, Reference 10, line 1. There are 4 more authors and on line 3, insert (6) after [11].


16. P 7, R 21, l 2. Insert (9780) after [377].
17. P 7, R 22. Insert (9780) after [377].
18. P 7, R 23. Insert (9780) after [377].
19. P 7, R 24. Insert more authors and insert (9780) after [377].
21. P 8, S(ection) 2.3, Flow diagram. There is an error on the right and no page number.
22. P 8, S 2.3, l 3. Spell out [incl.]. Also P 9, S 10.1, l 2. Notice l 3 where it is spelled out. Also P 13, heading Basic design.
23. P 10, Primary Objectives. The Economic Analysis (See P 11) contained the comparison of CBT vs GET, so why not here as well even though you have too little power? The time at which these are to be done should be stated.
24. P 11, p 1, l 4. Why include [physical] when it was not on the previous page?
26. P 12, p 2, SF-36. Which version? Also all outcome measures should have Rs and the size of the MCID (minimum clinically important difference) should be listed for each, even though the sample size has not been computed for each. Also each scale should have its measurement properties defined and how to interpret each scale.
27. P 12, p 3, I(tem) 1 b. [CGI] is not defined until 6.
28. P 12, p 4, l 12. [CDC] is not defined.
29. P 12, last p. The selection should be stated as this leads to improper reporting unless the papers are specified. How will the selection be made?
31. P 14, p 4, l 1. Provide a R to the protocol if it is published. On l 3, this would be a good place to see the MCID sizes.
32. P 15, p 3, l 2. Provide a R for ITT. There are many versions of this.
33. P 18, NB. Provide R where this list can be obtained, with an email address or some contact information.
34. P 18, S 3.5, p 2, l 4. Was some form of imputation considered? See the R to reporting of studies and missing data in NEJM 2013-Oct-04 for the Little RJ et al paper and the editorial as to how things seem to be going for publications. Include Rs for your strategy.
36. P 18, S 3.5, p 4, l 1. How do you decide [large] or [differ]?
37. P 19, S 4.2, p 1, l 1. Will you use percentages as well as proportions?
38. P 20, S 5.3, p 1, l a and b. Suggest replacing [Less] by [Fewer].
39. P 20, S 5.3. Consider adding a measure of the randomization integrity.
40. P 21, S 5.5. Consider adding the CONSORT R to the flow chart and reporting.
41. P 23, p 2. Is there a R to this technique?
42. P 23, S 6.4, p 2, l 3 and 9. Suggest changing [is] to [are] since data is a plural word. Also P 23, S 6.4, p 4, l 1.
44. P 23, S 6.4, p 3, l 3. Why 100 when most Rs suggest 5 or 10 will be adequate. Do you have a R as to why?
45. P 24, p 2, last l. Consider measuring the impact of missingness on the conclusions as per the Little R in 34.
46. P 24, S 6.5, l 1 and 2. Consider using 6 since the economic analysis will consider 6, not just 5. Also P 29, S 9.3, p a, l 1. Also P 35, p 1.
47. P 24, S 6.5, l 1. Replace [P] by [alpha].
48. P 25, S 7.1, p 2, l 2. Which definition of these two measures will you use: IQR = difference between quartiles 1 and 3; or the two quartiles separated with a dash? Similarly with range? Also P 27 does not make it consistent? See P 28 S 9.1 range use is not statistical.
50. P 29, S 9.3, p 2. Is the a R for the MCID?
51. P 33, last p, l 2. Suggest replacing [two fold increase] by [doubling].
52. P 34, S 10.3, p 6. Are the utilities contained in some R?
54. P 35, p 2. Provide Rs for all software with version numbers that is planned for use. Also P 36, S 13.
57. P 36 ff. These Rs are not standardized for trials reporting.
58. P 38, R 58. Is this DG Altman?