Reviewer's report

Title: Combining Attention Training with Cognitive-Behavior Therapy in Internet-based Self-help for Social Anxiety: Study Protocol for a Randomized Controlled Trial

Version: 1 Date: 15 January 2013

Reviewer: Rolf Wahlstrom

Reviewer's report:

General
This study focuses an important public health problem and aims at assessing an innovative therapeutic intervention by using the internet.

The study protocol is well designed and the presentation is mostly clear and accurate. However, there are some parts that need some clarification and there are a few editorial errors and mistakes in the reference list.

Minor essential revisions

Methods
For reasons of clarity, the expression “attention / control” should be avoided as it can be misunderstood. Instead, the meaning of the slash sign should be explained as is appropriate in each case.

Recruitment and procedure
First paragraph, 6th sentence: To avoid misunderstandings, the word “All” should be replaced by “Both” as there will be only two interviewers.

Second paragraph, 1st sentence: Again, to avoid misunderstandings, authors are recommended to add “at the end of week 2” and “at the end of week 11”.

Attention training and control training
Fifth paragraph, 3rd sentence: It is not evident that the intervention will consist of 14 sessions in the version of the table, that appears when clicking the link in the manuscript, as only 10 sessions are shown there. It seems that the missing part is the post-training assessment of attention bias, and if this include four sessions (both faces and words, and both 500ms and 1000ms) it will add up to 14 sessions. However, if that is the case, the authors need to explain how they will compare a pre-training assessment with only two variables, with the post-training assessment with four variables.

Outcome measures and Statistical analyses
For me it is not possible to understand which is the primary outcome measure and which are the secondary outcome measures. When reading the first sentence of the section “Outcome measures”, it seems clear that the LSAS is the
primary outcome measure. However, in the first paragraph of Statistical analyses, it seems to be explained that scores from what are called “secondary social anxiety scales” will be integrated with the LSAS into a “social anxiety composite”, which is not part of the “secondary outcome measures”. So which are then the secondary outcome measures?

Discussion

Last section, 3rd sentence: Authors are recommended to reconsider the expression: “we strongly hypothesize”. Apart from being semantically questionable, there is no need to make this ‘strong’ statement in this context.

References:

The journal’s Instructions have not been followed for any or some of the references regarding the following aspects:

1. Journals’ names should be abbreviated: all references, except #70;
2. Key words in journals’ names should start with capital letter: Ref #17,22,46,47,53,54,60,65 (also when abbreviated);
3. Titles of books and reports should be in italics: Ref #48,56.

There are also two other corrections:

Ref #20 and 61 have now been published (otherwise they could not have been included).

Other editorials:

Title page, affiliations:
Correct spelling: “Department of Clinical Neuroscience”;
Correct official name: “Karolinska Institutet”.

Title and headings:
Capital letters should only be used in the first word.

Introduction:
First paragraph, 7th sentence: Correct spelling: “fourth”.
Second paragraph, 8th sentence: Correct word: “clinically”.

Methods:
Attention training and control training:
Third paragraph, 2nd sentence: First “either” should be deleted.

Statistical analyses:
First paragraph, 7th sentence: Correct word: “clinically”.
Second paragraph, 5th sentence: Change “time” to “times”.

Table 1:
Clarification recommended in first column head: change to “trials per session”.
Incorrect spelling in first column: should be “assessment”.

Acknowledgements:
Change to official name: “Freie Universität”;
Use correct official name: “Karolinska Institutet” (occurring twice).