Reviewer's report

Title: Early intervention program reduces stress in parents of pre-terms during childhood; a randomized controlled trial.

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Reviewer: Riikka RK Korja

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Major Compulsory Revisions

I think this is an interesting article focusing at an important topic. More intervention studies of early parenting in the preterm population are needed. The result showing decrease of stress in the intervention group is very interesting. Study setting is well structured and data seem to be sound. However, I have some major concerns which are listed below.

My major concern is the motivation of the study question. Why this intervention method was selected? Why this intervention is assumed to decrease parental stress? Why only parenting stress was evaluated – why not any aspects of child’s development or parent-child relationships? How decrease of parenting stress would affect child and family relationships? I think authors should motivate the study question more in the revised manuscript.

In addition, I think that the overall of this article is a fragmented.

Concerns in the each sections of the study:

Introduction

I think that the introduction should include more studies and more insight about the relations between parental stress and child development and child’s attachment. Why parental stress is causing risk for the child’s development, parent-child relationships and parenting? What are the possible mechanisms explaining this association?

I suggest that the Mother-Infant Transaction Program (MITP) should be shortly explained (one or two sentences) in the introduction already. What are the benefits of MITP compared to other interventions? Why authors suggest that MITP would be affecting parental stress? What psychological aspects in the intervention of MITP would affect parenting stress? I also think that there should be presented more intervention studies (other intervention methods) where parenting stress has been on focus.

Methods

In the section of measures, the differences between PSI-FF and the PSI-SF should be presented in the beginning of the chapter. In addition, the abbreviations should be written open at the beginning of the chapter.
In the description of intervention methods, the main aim of the intervention should be more addressed. What is the main goal of the intervention? In addition, more theoretical background is needed for the method of intervention. Why this method is assumed to reduce parental stress? Is there some structured training for the method? In addition, more studies where this intervention is used could be presented in the section of introduction.

Results
I think that the language in the section of results is too statistical. First 3 short chapters in the section of results are pretty unclear for reader. I suggest that authors could write results open so that the findings are more linked to the study questions.

I was wondering if parental stress was affected by some other factors including preterm infant’s medical factors or family sos. econ. status? I suggest that authors would present the adjustments for the child's medical factors and family characteristics.

Discussion
I think that in the section discussion authors should focus more on the main finding: association between parental stress and intervention. Now authors are speculating that intervention was affecting child’s development or parent-child development. However, these aspects were not evaluated in the present study. I think that authors should be more focused on the concept of parenting stress. Why intervention was affecting parenting stress? What psychological mechanism may explain this association? And after that, authors may carefully stress how this finding may possible affects the family relationships and child’s development.

I also think that it authors could stress more the differences between mothers and fathers.

Overall, I think that discussion is a bit fragmented. I suggest that authors would tight discussion and stress more the main findings. In addition, I also suggest the authors should address more the clinical implications of the findings.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

no