Reviewer’s report

Title: Weight maintenance treatment approach for adolescent obesity: case management via telephone counselling and SMS - the TeAM program (RCT)

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Reviewer: Lana Hebden

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Review for BMC Obesity

Manuscript Title: Weight maintenance treatment approach for adolescent obesity: case management via telephone counselling and SMS – the TeAM program (RCT)

Major Compulsory Revisions

There is no mention of the sample size that will be recruited for the RCT. Some calculations for the sample size should be included here to indicate how many subjects will be required to achieve a clinically significant difference in BMI-SDS during the trial.

When reporting methods and results of the feasibility study, this should be written in past tense as this feasibility study has been completed.

More detail is needed regarding the Facebook page. Is this just to advertise the study?

From your ‘data analysis’ it seems the only outcome that will be analysed for your RCT is the primary outcome (which I assume is BMI-SDS as it is not clear from your paper what the primary outcome is). You are however, collecting data on many other outcomes. How will these be analysed? For example, will analysis of co-variance be used adjusting for treatment site, case manager and gender?

Minor Essential Revisions

Write in full the abbreviation ‘BMI-SDS-reduction’ where it is first used in your abstract.

‘TeAM was registered in the German Clinical Trials Register in 2012...’

Does there need to be a space between ‘AdiposityDiseases’? (Methods, third paragraph).

It is not clear why you mention the Clinical Trial Centre (KSL). Is this where the ‘Integrated Research and Treatment Centre AdiposityDiseases’ is located? (Methods, third paragraph).

‘Thus, the difference between both groups reflects the impact of the intervention...’ (Methods, sixth paragraph).

A major source of bias in a RCT of a lifestyle intervention program is the participant’s awareness of their allocated group (i.e. control versus active
treatment). Awareness of their health condition and willingness to participate are rare sources of bias as both groups are usually aware of their health condition and consent before randomisation, if you see what I mean. Therefore, I do not think this sentence is relevant and should be removed (Methods, sixth paragraph).

‘To remind the participant, his/her tasks are sent to the participant’s mobile phone via short message service (SMS) text messages.’ (Methods, twelfth paragraph). It is also not clear how these task messages are ‘tailored’?

‘Reminders are generated by an internet-based SMS platform.’ (Methods, twelfth paragraph).

‘...indicates the utility of systematic appointment reminders one day ahead of a counselling date to encourage participant’s attendance at their counselling session.’ (Methods, twelfth paragraph).

‘In the calculation of SDS values, changes over time according to age and sex are taken into account.’ (Methods, thirteenth paragraph).

You need to state somewhere what your primary outcome is (I assume it is BMI-SDS).

Define abbreviations ‘IFB’ and ‘GCP’ (Methods, fifteenth paragraph), and ‘ICH-GCP’ (Methods, sixteenth paragraph).

‘Descriptive analyses of baseline data were performed using R software version 2.15.0’ (Methods, fifteenth paragraph).

Suggest deleting the first sentence of the results and then include at the beginning of the second paragraph ‘Of the 38 adolescents recruited for the feasibility study, 14 were boys and 24 were girls.’ (Results, first paragraph).

It is stated that 38 adolescents were included in the feasibility study, yet the results are based on n=35 participants. Did the other three participants drop out of the study? This need to be made clear at beginning of the results.

Table 1 is poorly presented. Define ‘+ parents’ as a footnote to the table’. Indicate the frequency, number and nature (e.g. task reminder, counselling session reminder) of SMS text messages sent to participants in Table 1.

The authors also need to be clearer in the methods (probably under ‘session content’) as to what is covered in the anamnestic, mental hygiene, physical activity and nutrition sessions. Are there any guidelines underlying the goals set with adolescents for their nutrition, mental health or physical activity? For example, clinical treatment guidelines for managing obesity in paediatric populations, or national public health guidelines for physical activity or nutrition.

Discretionary Revisions

The statement ‘All candidates are addressed directly’ is not clear here. I think you mean the adolescents were addressed directly, rather than through their parents. Due to word limitations, it may be best to leave this out of your abstract.

From when does this data refer to ‘...obese individuals accrued medical care costs approximately 30% higher...’, e.g. in 2010? (Background, first paragraph).
‘...is in- and/or out-patient...’ (Background, first paragraph).

‘The design of the TeAM-study is a randomized controlled trial. Reporting of this trial is in accordance with the 2010 CONSORT Statement (25)’ (Methods, first paragraph).

Use lower case for ‘follow-up’, i.e. ‘...medical practices (post intervention assessment, follow-up assessments)’ (Methods, third paragraph).

The term ‘reconvalescent care’ is not so common in public health literature. May the term ‘treatment’ or ‘weight loss treatment’ or ‘obesity therapy’ be used instead?

‘To ensure the quality of the counselling and adherence to the study manual...’ (Methods, seventh paragraph).

Table 2
- Suggest changing the title of table 2 to ‘Baseline characteristics of participants from the feasibility study (N=38)’.
- Could use N (%) rather than ‘Numbers (%)’.
- Be consistent in use of decimal places.
- Capitalise outcome measures ‘Duration of reconvalescent care’ and ‘Presence of co-morbidities’

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

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests