Reviewer’s report

Title: Patient information, communication and competence empowerment in oncology (PIKKO) – Evaluation of a supportive care intervention for overall oncological patients. Study protocol of a non-randomized controlled trial.

Version: 0 Date: 27 Mar 2020

Reviewer: Research Square Reviewer 1

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?
No - there are major issues

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
No - there are major issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
No - there are major issues

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
No - there are major issues

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Maybe - with major revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS:
This is an interesting study that aimed at providing and evaluating a program for providing cancer information to patients. The study addressed an important need for cancer patients and tried to evaluate it in different modules and methods with different groups of providers and patients. The study has major weaknesses that need revisions and clarifications.
REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Abstract:
- The aim of the study needs to be clarified at the end of the Background section of the Abstract. The aim needs to clarify that this manuscript is a methodological manuscript to illustrate how this study was planned, implemented, and evaluated.
- The study participants need to be in the first sentence of the Methods section of the Abstract.
- The Methods section needs to mention briefly the statistical methods used to evaluate the study.
- The first sentence in the Discussion belongs to the aim of the study, not Discussion.
- The future direction in the Discussion is unclear. The future direction needs to be clear in terms of future evaluation and having results, modifying the study based on the findings of this first stage, expanding the study to other regions in Germany, or guidelines for other researchers who would like to benefit from this study for other regions, settings, or countries.

Background:
- The funding source needs to be taken out of this section. This could be part of the Acknowledgment.
- This section needs to end with the aim of the study.

Methods:
- Would selecting from three health systems, 25 cities, and 80 providers create a selection bias for future generalization of the results?
- How would the wide age range be a problem for different needs of different age groups?
- Same for all cancers. Different cancer sites would have different needs and information requirements. Would focusing on a specific and limited number of cancer sites make the study more under control?
- How would the heterogeneous sample affect the interpretation and generalization of the results?
- The recruitment needs to be in the beginning, not the end of this section.
- What is the response rate of participants?
- What is the difference between respondents and non-respondents and how would that affect selection bias and generalization of the results?

Discussion:
- The strengths, not just the limitations, need to be included in this section.
- Comparison with similar studies from other countries needs to be included in this section.

General comment:
The manuscript is too long and readers will lose interest in reading it because of its length.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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