Reviewer’s report

Title: An education intervention to improve decision making and health literacy among older Australians: a randomised controlled trial

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Reviewer: Cathy Maxwell

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BMC Geriatrics Review: Manuscript BGTC-D-17-00608

Thank you for the opportunity to review this important manuscript on decision-making aids for older adults. Advancing understanding of this process is important for all investigators who work with older adults. Comments are categorized below by manuscript sections.

Background
The content is thorough and inclusive of current literature on decision-making in older adults. The authors highlight the use of complementary medicine (CM) and high rates of non-disclosure to health care providers. The authors hypothesize that a web/DVD education intervention group would demonstrate higher decision self-efficacy than a booklet only group.

Methods
The design is a non-blinded parallel randomized controlled trial. Participants were recruited from retirement villages and senior citizen clubs and associations. These groups represent a potential selection bias. Recruitment efforts are reported, however the authors do not state if an incentive was offered.

- Intervention: Two multi-media education modalities (Web-based/DVD vs. booklet only). The authors state that these programs offer advantages over traditional information delivery methods. It would be helpful to clarify what is meant by "traditional."
- The intellectual content of the intervention and control group is well-described, with theoretical underpinnings noted.

The randomization procedure was appropriate and explained well. Participants were not blinded to group allocation.

Outcomes were assessed at baseline, 3 weeks, and two months from baseline. Health literacy was assessed as a secondary outcome.

Sample size, based on effect size, is clearly presented, including planned attrition. Statistical analysis plan is clear and appears appropriate for the hypothesis and outcomes.
Results
The results are quite thorough and well described and presented in tables that include 95% confidence intervals. The study found no statistical difference between CM education delivery modalities, however the results did show that BOTH modalities improved decision making and health literacy. This is an important finding that will be useful to other investigators.

Discussion
Limitations of the study are noted and adequately covered

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

Unable to assess

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

Yes

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

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