Reviewer's report

Title: Improving medication adherence in stroke patients through Short Text Messages (SMS4Stroke)-study protocol for a randomized, controlled trial

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Reviewer: Sarah L. Cutrona

Reviewer's report:

This is a protocol paper describing a randomized, controlled, assessor blinded study testing use of SMS texts to support adherence to medications for secondary stroke prevention in patients recruited from a Stroke clinic. This study is very well-written and addresses an important problem: adherence to medications (antiplatelet, anti-lipid and anti-hypertensives) aimed at secondary stroke prevention in Pakistan. Authors describe a promising technique for improving adherence in resource-strapped nations. Their description of study protocol is thorough, vigorous, detailed and they cite several appropriate theoretical underpinnings to their intervention development. Their description of FrontlineSMS (a free and open source software which they will use for their intervention) and their inclusion of study materials will help others reproduce their efforts.

My comments/questions are minor:

On page 13 authors say that special care is taken to maintain confidentiality of patient’s disease and diagnosis will not be mentioned. Yet examples of texts (p 9) included references to Stroke happening again and ‘Please take your blood pressure medicine” and the texts listed in SMS templates do reference smoking, blood pressure pills, cholesterol lowering meds, etc. Please clarify the comment on page 13.

It would be interesting to see if there are differences in acceptability of SMS texts between those patients already receiving SMS appointment reminders vs. those not yet accustomed to any SMS communication from medical center. Would also be interesting to see if those for whom caregivers have the phone have different response rates to intervention.

Is the recording of patient response to texts automatic or is there a person monitoring this and handling the phone follow up?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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