Reviewer’s report

Title: Feasibility and acceptability of combining cognitive behavioural therapy techniques with swallowing therapy in head and neck cancer dysphagia

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Reviewer: Tim Beck

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Feasibility and acceptability of combining cognitive behavioural therapy techniques with swallowing therapy in head and neck cancer dysphagia

JM Patterson et al.

Manuscript synopsis:

In the submitted manuscript, JM Patterson et al., describe the application of cognitive behavioral enhanced swallowing therapy (CB-EST) to post-treatment patients with head and neck cancer (HNC). Patients with head and neck cancer frequently suffer from dysphagia, which significantly affects quality of life. Providing CB-EST to this patient population may provide significant benefits to them and JM Petterson et al. describe several interesting observations. Unfortunately, the study design is suboptimal, significantly reducing enthusiasm for the manuscript.

Major Concerns:

1. There is no control group. It is not completely surprising that patients with head and neck cancer get better after treatment. Perhaps CB-EST helps patients, but without an adequate control group (i.e., patients that receive standard pre- and post-treatment care) it is impossible to determine how effective CB-EST is.

2. Are the pre- and post-treatment results for patients requiring different treatment approaches (surgery + radiation versus chemoradiation, etc.) equivalent? That would have to be shown. Focusing only on a single treatment approach may simplify matters.

3. The number of patients (Table 3 only includes 22-40) is extremely limited and additional patients should be recruited.
Minor Concerns:


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.

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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