Reviewer’s report

Title: Short and Long-term Barriers and Facilitators of Skin Self-Examination Among Individuals Diagnosed with Melanoma

Version: 0 Date: 12 Oct 2019

Reviewer: June K. Robinson

Reviewer's report:

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The manuscript provides an excellent review of the SSE literature, but the literature review is not current in all aspects. This is an observational study of customary clinical practice using standardized dermatologic education on skin cancer prevention with a surveys of melanoma survivors, who provided self-reported outcomes. The content of this education needs to be stated in the methods. Skin Cancer Prevention programs as currently stated in the methods may be limited to sun protection with a cursory mention of SSE. Such programs do not use a structured SSE training program as an intervention. The reader is informed about the content of the education in the discussion on page 15 lines 53-57.

The finding that SSE is maintained over 24 months with the greatest performance in the immediate usual care education supports the work of others but does not "break new ground". The authors refer to a number of their own unpublished works about development of measures, and briefly state the five items inquiring about separate body areas, which are grouped in a manner that is not supported by SSE performance of trained melanoma survivors and their skin check partners (Robinson JAMA Dermatol 2016, Turrisi JAMA Dermatol 2015). As an example, if in page 10 line 50, the subject was asked about examination of head and neck which included face, neck and scalp, then the subject would have difficulty responding as SSE of the face (easy to see alone) is more frequent than that of the scalp (difficult to see alone).

The following two areas of concern decrease the importance and reliability of the data presented:

1. Retention at 3-6 months was 40% and at 24 months was 21%, thus, the responses are likely to be skewed in the direction of responses from those who are performing SSE as those not performing SSE dropped out.
2. Documentation of delivery of education and reminders in the "naturalistic setting" should be possible, e.g. number of times the patient received a total body skin exam with a dermatologist during the 24 month period of the study, and physician reminders to perform SSE as perceived by patients during the total body skin exam . Confounding of the results by the dermatologic care received is alluded to in the discussion (page 16 lines 40-46).

Specific:

1. This observational study with longitudinal assessment of melanoma patients does not consider non-melanoma skin cancer patients or their customary education in SSE, thus, reference to all types of skin cancer on page 6 lines 3-5 (the first sentence) should be deleted.
2. A participant flow chart is provided in the Appendix rather than as a CONSORT Diagram in the body of the printed publication. This is peculiar.

3. The first sentence of the discussion is troubling. The RCT by Robinson et al (JAMA Dermatol 2016 not cited in the references) reports follow-up through 24 months. While the authors seek to differentiate their work as follow-up in "best-practice" care from the RCT, they should at least acknowledge the published RCT.

4. Discussion: limitations - move the confounding of the results by the dermatologic care received (page 16 lines 40-46) to the limitations section.

5. Recommendation re future intervention studies (Discussion page 18, lines 7-12) should note that the recommended study was done as an RCT.

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

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If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

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