Reviewer’s report

Title: A pilot feasibility randomised controlled trial of an adjunct brief social network intervention in opiate substitution treatment services in England

Version: 0  Date: 24 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Morten Hesse

Reviewer's report:

I found this study to be both interesting and well-written. The argument is very easy to follow, the methods are clearly described, and the data are presented in a highly transparent manner. My only reservation is with the interpretation of the findings, which I find to be overly pessimistic in some respects, and in some respect need to be generalized to apply outside of the UK context.

The system described in the discussion, where clinics have to re-tender the contract to provide treatment services is a policy that is very likely to be similar in other countries, or to have parallels at some level. I believe this warrants a broader comment, as it is crucial in order to deliver adequate care to people with chronic problems that services are continuous - A. Thomas McLellan, Barack Obama's drug czar, has recently made similar observations (e.g. Public Health Rev. 2014 Jan; 35(2)).

In addition, the negative findings from the present study should not speak against further testing of the treatment models in this study - if anything, the authors should consider ways to recruit more patients, ways to overcome barriers to participation, including perhaps contingency management.

Thus, the authors produced the useful findings that (a) the treatments could be taught to case managers, (b) clients need more incentives to show up, and (c) clinics need to function well in order to recruit patients. These are in my view highly significant findings, and they clearly point to how a bigger trial can actually test the usefulness of these two approaches.
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.
Yes

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.
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