Reviewer’s report

Title: The Effect of Exercise as Adjunctive Treatment on Quality of Life for Individuals with Alcohol Use Disorders: a randomized controlled trial

Version: 0 Date: 23 Feb 2019

Reviewer: John Mooney

Reviewer's report:

PUBH_D_18_03629: The Effect of Exercise as Adjunctive Treatment on Quality of Life for Individuals with Alcohol Use Disorders: a randomized controlled trial.

Many thanks for the opportunity to review the above paper. This was a robustly designed trial seeking to answer important questions about how best to improve QoL for patients with alcohol use disorder. Negative results of course are as important to disseminate as interventions which do appear to be effective in what they set out to do, so the study findings could potentially represent an important contribution to the literature. Methodologically the paper has a number of strengths including reasonable compliance and retention for a traditional "hard to reach group" and the inclusion of intention to treat analysis to adjust for attrition.

Major comments

As it is currently presented however, the investigation seems to suffer from some key omissions which would enhance the usefulness of the paper. The most central of these in my own opinion is the lack of any information on the extent of the impact which the intervention might have had on the primary outcome of interest for this population, which is surely the impact on respective level of alcohol consumption? Since the exercise intervention is (principally) an ‘an adjunctive tool’ in the treatment of AUDs’, this begs the immediate question of how successful the treatment was?

The authors therefore risk doing themselves a considerable disservice through their exclusive focus on subjectively self-assessed quality of life measures for a group of patients in whom this is likely to be low to begin with and very challenging to improve. Perhaps the results around the effectiveness of treatment are the subject of a separate report for reasons of length or similar, but it does leave this paper in its current form to be top-heavy with additional questions that outweigh the value of the brief answers supplied. If for example, there was a subset of participants for whom the outcomes around drinking were more successful, then some form of restriction or stratified analysis using the reported effectiveness of the treatment or potentially the degree of severity of AUD to begin with (which was clearly part of the baseline data collection), would enhance considerably the interest level of the paper to readers. The latter concern is brought into focus by the higher drop-out rate for those with more severe
presentations (i.e. higher alcohol composite scores) on average at the baseline data-gathering stage.

More minor concerns

Abstract:

Results and conclusion are very minimalist - it might be more interesting to highlight any difference (and its direction) - while of course highlighting that it was not statistically significant (e.g. the results around reported levels of pain and mobility on P11 & P12).

Introduction:

Well written and comprehensively researched, providing a sound rationale for the study..

Methods:

Was randomization blinded for assessors?

P6 lines 12-17, authors say: The treatment offered consists of motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy and family therapy. Further, acute treatment for withdrawal symptoms and other kinds of pharmacological treatment may also be offered.

It would be useful to have a breakdown of how many participants (from presumably the 'usual care' arm') had each of these treatments, including any treated for withdrawal symptoms.

P6 Line 51 - 53: Participants - non completers / drop outs had higher addiction severity scores - not surprising - but check covered in discussion..

P6-P7: 'either alone or in a training group' would be useful to have breakdown of how many were in each

Discussion

P11: lines: Odd phrasing - not sure what is meant by 'feeling nothing' - is this the authors own interpretation / expression "Is it better to actually feel that you have used your body, even though it hurts, rather than doping your body with drugs and feel nothing?"

JM
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.

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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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