**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Promoting parenting strategies to improve tooth brushing in children. Design of a non-randomised cluster-controlled trial

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 28 Feb 2019

**Reviewer:** Peter Milgrom

**Reviewer's report:**

The authors have generally been quite responsive and the changes have improved the manuscript.

The primary problem remaining is the description of the behavioral outcome. They describe it as the (parental) practice of twice daily toothbrushing in children. In fact, the measure is to be constructed from three measures: (self-report) of parent toothbrushing of the child (apparently a dichotomous measure but not described clearly); a self-efficacy scale score; and the child's dental plaque score at examination. However, the authors do not explain how they will derive their actual measure. In the analysis section, they treat each of these outcomes separately. Moreover, there is really no rationale given for combining these measures to derive the proposed behavioral outcome score.

The remaining problems are largely grammatical. As the journal does little editing, the authors need to address these problems:

Page 4, line 17. Insert "by the parent" after fluoride toothpaste.
Page 4, line 29. Delete "does" and add an s to "lead"
Page 4, line 43. Qualitative focus group interviews should be changed to "qualitative research".
Page 4, line 48. Reword "They also expressed to be motivated.." to They also say they are motivated.
Page 4, line 51. Delete "common barriers were associated with" Start the sentence as "Non compliant child behavior is often due to…(delete e.g.)"
Page 4, line 56. Delete "rarely"
Page 6, line 5. Delete the comma after children.
Page 8, line 7. Delete the word allocated. Reword the sentence to say that "Practices that volunteered to be part of the intervention group" will implement….
Page 8, line 46. Substitute the word "included" for the word "covered."
Page 9, line 31. Substitute the word "Parents" for the word "Subjects."
Page 10, lines 53-56. Reword this sentence once the outcome variable is clarified.
Page 15. Revise the description of the behavioral outcome measure as discussed above. Also modify the data collection section. Also provide a justification for measuring these things at T1, which appears to be an intervention.
Page 18. Co-variates. These are either mediators or moderators of the behavioral and clinical outcomes. They should be discussed as such and their inclusion justified.
The discussion is overly long and much of the theoretical material is either duplicative or not necessary. The discussion should be cut by one-half.

Archiving the URL references is simple (http://www.webcitation.org) and free. The authors should be concerned that these references remain available. To say they are unfamiliar with this process is unacceptable.

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.

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?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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