Reviewer’s report

Title: Mindfulness and compassion-oriented practices at work reduce distress and enhance self-care of palliative care teams: a mixed-method evaluation of an „on the job“ program

Version: 0 Date: 06 Sep 2016

Reviewer: Robin R Whitebird

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript describes a feasibility and effectiveness study focused on an intervention to reduce distress and enhance self-care of palliative care teams. The study uses a mixed method design that includes self-report and participant interview data. The study is well done, but with many layers of data that can make it somewhat difficult to fully grasp the importance of each level of data. Overall I think the manuscript it well-done, but do wish to have the authors consider whether the data would be better served as a single manuscript or as two manuscripts focused on different aspects of the data. I also have a number of specific comments.

1. You have chosen to abbreviate the term "palliative care practitioners" as PCP. While this is logical, the term PCP has long been associated with primary care practitioners and I would encourage you to consider this as a potential point of confusion.

2. Page 5, description of Metta and Tong-len practice. Consider providing a clearer definition at the outset for each of these- what does the word Metta mean and what does the word Tong-en mean? You discuss the practice, but that does not provide a clear definition of the meaning. Also Tong-len needs additional clarity- how exactly is this different from Metta? Perhaps a sentence for each on how it is defined and then how the practices are similar and different could be helpful.

3. Page 6- you say ecological valid approach - please define this more clearly.

4. Page 6, Design - this could also be described as: a pilot one-arm study using a mixed-method approach.

5. Was this study reviewed by an Institutional Review Board?

6. Page 5 - Intervention. Does the program have a name? The first sentence could use more clarity how the program was structured. You mention "full staff" in the second sentence - were all staff participating - did you mean the study participants? You say brief meditation sessions of 15 minutes were offered every hour - across the entire day? How much practice is that? This was in addition to one-to- one meetings? This is a significant amount of time and attention for an intervention and brings up the questions of whether the results could be influenced by the intensity of the intervention - please address this.
7. Page 5 - intervention. You mention both coaching on page 13 under qualitative data description but I do not see that in the description of the intervention? You have data on goal attainment - where was this addressed in the intervention?

8. Page 8 - Self-reported instruments. Please include information about the reliability and validity for each measure you describe. Please list out the full title of the SCL-90-R-SOMS. Under Work Situation (NRS) Please list the questions used in this in addition to the scaling of the response sets.

9. Page 9, Line 5 - on goal attainment in the introductory sessions. This needs to be moved to the intervention section. The intervention should describe everything that was included (coaching and goal attainment)

10. Page 10, Table 2 - concrete inquiries are often called probes in qualitative interviewing.

11. You need a section on Data Collection in the methods section that describes how you collected the survey/questionnaire data from participants and how the interviews were conducted. Pull out the material from your section on qualitative evaluation related to how the interviews were conducted and put the material on qualitative analysis in a separate section titled as such. Move that section right before the statistical analysis.

12. Page 11 - statistical analysis. Please include the descriptive analysis (frequencies /percentages) that you included in the analysis

13. Page 11. Please open the results section with an introductory paragraph that describes the participants- not with a subheading.

14. The part of your work addressing goal attainment is not well integrated into the method section so comes as a bit of a surprise in the results. You need to say more about this earlier and how it related to the program which seemed more focused on meditation techniques and loving kindness - why was goal attainment included? What was its purpose in the intervention?

15. Qualitative data - while this reviewer appreciates the structured presentation of the qualitative data, it is usually presented in a more integrative fashion where the theme is presented and discussed and the quotes are used to show how the theme is present in the data (which are the words). You have rich qualitative data that may be better in a stand-alone paper where you have the opportunity to present the data more fully. Much of what you have in the paragraph presenting the results is more appropriate to a discussion section of the results for a qualitative paper.

16. Qualitative data analysis. On the presentation of the data- thematic analysis is the focus of most qualitative data analysis. Usually categories are established and then the themes identified - it is the themes that are the end result, not categories. Categories are like buckets and the themes are the essence that runs through. What you have listed as categories are in some ways more like themes and your themes are more like sub-themes. I am not sure you have fully completed your qualitative analysis- it is far more descriptive than thematic as it is currently presented.
17. Is mindful pauses in the midst of stress really a theme or category - how so? Page 16, quote #2 in self positioning as compassionate - how is communication related to that?

18. page 17, paragraph 1 of discussion - it’s not clear to me why you included the PROQOL here. Please list the full title of the instrument before the acronym.

19. A well done discussion section in general.

**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:

Acceptable

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