Reviewer’s report

Title: Which online format is most effective for assisting Baby Boomers to complete advance directives? A randomised controlled trial of email prompting versus online education module

Version: 0 Date: 14 May 2017

Reviewer: Brinkman Stoppelenburg

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting study on an important topic, the effectiveness of two online formats for the completion of advance directives.

However, I have a few remarks on the structure of the article and the methodology.

In general, it is acknowledged that Advance Care Planning is a process that encompasses more than the completion of Advance Directives. It is a process of multiple discussions over time, with family and healthcare providers. The fact that there are low completion rates however does not say anything about the effectiveness of ADs once they are completed, as is stated in line 96.

Regarding the intervention, it doesn't come as a surprise that an e-mail prompt just asking people whether they have completed ADs, should lead to an increase in completion. This doesn't seem to be a strong intervention.

Specific comments

- What is the aim of the research and what are the specific research questions? Now it states "How successful can online... p 119" The aim and research question(s) should be consistent throughout the paper (abstract, introduction, results and discussion). For example: a section in the results is "Factors associated with actual AD completion'. Was "assessing which factors are associated with AD completion" a research question? This holds for other items that are presented in the results section as well (reasons influencing AD completion etc). The research questions should be clearly stated in the abstract and introduction.

- The introduction could be shortened and more consistent. From line 121 methods are described. This text should be transferred to the method section.
- Other studies have shown that online formats do not lead to an increasing completion rate of healthcare ADs (line 95). What was done in this study to improve the completion rates?

- The results section could be more structured. Start with a description of the population and then systematically answer the research questions. Replace "primary outcome" (line 261) by the research question. Details about statistical analysis could transferred to the method section (e.g. line 262).

To describe the results, make use of tables or figures.

- The discussion is too long and not well structured. Start with a short summary of the results / address each research question. Then reflect on the results. More literature can be used. An important part the strengths and weaknesses are lacking. It would improve the article if the authors could elaborate on this.

- Appendix 9 figure 7, please mention the total n.

**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 recommend additional statistical review
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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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