Author’s response to reviews

Title: Implementing the theory-based advance care planning ACP+ programme for nursing homes: study protocol for a cluster randomised controlled trial and process evaluation

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Assistant Editor Comments:

1. Editorial Board Member

As Yvonne Engels is a member of the editorial board (Associate Editor) of this journal, in order to ensure transparency, please declare this in the Competing Interests section of the Declarations, stating that they had no role in the editorial process.

RESPONSE: The Competing Interests section now states: "The authors declare that they have no competing interests. Yvonne Engels is a member of the editorial board of BMC Palliative Care (Associate Editor). She had no role in the editorial process of this paper."
2. Consent

--Currently, you have stated 'Consent to participate in the trial will be sought at cluster level', please can you clarify whether consent was obtained from all participant before commencement of the trial and was not just for the completion of the questionnaire.

--please also state whether the informed consent obtained was written or verbal. If verbal, please state the reason.

RESPONSE: The consent section now states: "The study and method of consent was approved by the Ethics Committee of University Hospital Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussels, 22/02/2018, ref: 18-003 - B.U.N. 143201834759). Important protocol modifications will be communicated to all relevant parties: investigators, trial participants, Ethics Committee and ClinicalTrials.gov. Consent to participate in the trial will be sought at cluster level, meaning the facility managers of the participating nursing homes gave permission for the researchers to interact with all staff, and the trainers to interact with both staff, involved GPs, residents and family. The researchers will not interact with any of the residents or family in the participating nursing homes. Research data collected via questionnaires that will be voluntarily filled in by respondents. By filling in the questionnaire, the participant consents (in writing) to his/her data being used in the study. In addition, all persons participating in qualitative data collection methods must give their informed consent in writing and will be fully informed before participating by one of the researchers (JG or AWvD)."

3. Trial Registration

-- Please include whether the trial was 'prospectively / retrospectively registered' under 'trial registration'.

RESPONSE: The abstract now includes: "Trial registration: The study is registered at ClinicalTrials.gov (no. NCT03521206). Registration date: May 10, 2018. Inclusion of nursing homes started March, 2018. Hence, the trial was retrospectively registered but before end of data collection and analyses."
4. Cite

-- Please ensure that all figures/tables and supplementary files are cited within the text. Any items which are not cited may be deleted by our production department upon publication.

RESPONSE: We added in the measures section: "Questions and scale metrics of the measures are provided in Additional file 1."

5. Clean Manuscript

At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colours. All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files. Please ensure that all figures, tables and additional/supplementary files are cited within the text.

RESPONSE: According to us this is okay. Please let us know what you mean?

Thank you,