Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 06 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Berend Feddersen

Reviewer's report:

The authors describe a very interesting and innovative study protocol for a cluster randomised controlled trial and process evaluation, focusing on the implementation of an ACP+ programme for nursing homes.

I have the following comments and remarks:

P8 line 128 please specify the training of the ACP trainers, do they have a specific curriculum?

P 9 line 150. Is this questionnaire published elsewhere?

P 9 line 151 How is the selection criteria of the nursing home staff? Will everybody be asked to take part in the outcome measurements?

P 9 line 152: please provide the complete questionnaire as supplemental covering the following outcome measurements: Knowledge of ACP, Self-efficacy towards ACP, Attitudes towards ACP, ACP practices

P9 line 162: As the construct ACP practices ask about ACP activities in the past six month, I’m wondering if it would be clearer to ask about ACP activities in the past 4 months, as the preparation and training phase lasts 4 months.

P10 line 169-170 please include in the list of abbreviations KATZ (p 10 line 169) and GERACC (p 10 line 170)
P12 line 238. Please give the abbreviations of (RIZIV/INAMI).

P13 line 249 nursing homes are subdivided to match in facility status and then number of beds. As this is a study focussing on the knowledge and skills of nursing home staff, I’m not sure if it would be more appropriate to match in number of nursing home care staff and nursing home support staff?

P13 line 254 Please give further insights between the difference when a nursing home in the control receives ACP training as „standard best practice care“ (remains in control group) versus an „extensive ACP policy and practice“ (exclusion criteria)

P18 line 378 please explain abbreviation NVIVO

P19 line 391 abbreviation EMGO

Please specify the documents of the ACP conversation, does they correspond to a specific ACP programme, what topics are covered, are emergencies included (like the POLST=Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment)?

Is it planned that after the trial the control nursing homes have access to the implementation of ACP+? Please specify and comment.

Please specify, maybe in a figure or in a table, the different ACP roles: ACP-trainer, ACP ref person, ACP conversation facilitators, ACP antennas

**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.

Unable to assess

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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