Reviewer’s report

Title: TALKING TIME: A pilot randomized controlled trial investigating social support for informal caregivers via the telephone

Version: 3 Date: 01 Jun 2020

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses one or several testable research questions? (Brief or other article types: is there a clear objective?)
Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with sufficient technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
No - there are minor issues

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Has the author addressed your concerns sufficiently for you to now recommend the work as a technically sound contribution? If not, can further revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Yes - current version is technically sound

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: The authors have been responsive to this reviewer's suggestions and the manuscript has improved considerably. However there are a limited number of outstanding opportunities to build upon this improvement that are identified in the next section.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:
Abstract 44-52—the Results section of the abstract should focus on and identify the primary outcome of self-rated psychological health-related quality of life (the fact that this metric is identified in the Methods and Discussion but not the Results is somewhat confusing to the reader).
Background 85-87—this sentence seems to need a citation(s).

Background 116-117—the authors seem to draw a distinction with the clause "in the foreground" but then do not identify the contrasting information. Either this phrase should be dropped or there needs to be a parallel in the sentence structure.

Methods—given that the study is designed to evaluate self-rated psychological health-related quality of life among other important outcomes, it would be of importance to understand whether other types of informal caregiver support may have influence beyond the TALKING TIME intervention. In the previous round, this reviewer inquired as to whether any of the informal caregivers were receiving additional support such as periods of respite or participation in day-programs. If this information is simply not available for this phase of testing that is understandable but going forward the authors might wish to include and control for such factors.

Discussion 421-423—the authors might also include first person testimonials (either written or short videos) from prior participants in their future recruitment efforts

Discussion 425-429—would advise the authors to not identify the process evaluation that is not reported in this manuscript as a study strength.

Conclusion lines 480-483—"satisfaction…with the intervention" should perhaps not be equated with having one's needs met. These are important yet different constructs that should be identified separately.

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.

No

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

Acceptable

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