Reviewer's report

Title: Home-based tele-supervising rehabilitation for brain infarction patients: study protocol for a prospective, randomized, paralleled controlled trial

Version: 1
Date: 14 December 2014

Reviewer: Erik Cobo

Reviewer's report:

Review - Trials – Home stroke rehabilitation protocol

I read the protocol trial paper from Wei Jin, et al. about the home stroke rehabilitation trial protocol, and I may answer positively to the 5 questions Trials Journal has posed to me “(1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis? 2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing? 3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate? 4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation? 5. Is the writing acceptable?)”; although I’m not qualified to guarantee the last one is fulfilled.

So, I think that it deserves publication in Trials. Nevertheless, I would like to make some suggestions.

- Major Compulsory Revision

Please, consider adhering to the SPIRIT reporting guideline for trial protocols.

As your sample size determination indicates the study of efficacy through the Barthel index, please clarify what you mean by feasibility and validity in your study aims. Alternatively, please change “feasibility, validity” by “efficacy” through the text.

In page 5 and 10 you specify a “20% dropout rate” and “analyzed according to an intent-to-treat basis (…) Missing data will not be included”. Please, note that the ITT principle requests an outcome evaluation for each “as randomized” patient. To prevent missing values as well as withdrawals, please see very useful advice at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12955 or http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMr1203730

Please, clarify how “allocation concealment” will be guaranteed (will the recruiter know the allocated group before obtaining informed consent?). Maybe, as Spirit recommends, with a separate column for allocation after enrollment and baseline assessment.

Following Spirit 2013, please consider specifying your dissemination policy (item 31).

Please clarify how you will prevent physician unmasking previously and during the patient evaluation interview (how you will avoid the patient spontaneously reporting the treatment?).

- Minor essential Revisions
Please, consider specifying that the “statistical analysis plan” will be fully specified before unmasking. [Please, note that Barthel is non-normally distributed and you need to specify if sample size is big enough to use the Normal distribution as reference; or you prefer to move to other methods; or you will add those methods as sensitivity analyses.]

The definition of the intervention and training of caregivers is essential to allow future repeatability. Please, consider specifying that your future report will follow the reporting guidelines TIDIER for description of interventions; and the CONSORT extension for non-pharmacological drugs (please note that it advises specifying eligibility criteria for caregivers).

- Discretionary revisions

The next sentence in page 3 confuses me: “it may also reduce travel time, help patients discharge from inpatient rehabilitation facilities earlier, and save the cost”. I’m sure it will reduce “travel time”! And I wonder if you pretend to measure also cost, time to discharge, or patient behavior once monitored rehabilitation is finished. Please, consider alternate wording.

Please, to improve communication, consider an acronym for your study.

Please, as any trial has to be prospective, consider deleting prospective through the text and title.

Please, note a typo in “mian”, last paragraph, page 4.

My best wishes for the next phases of your meritorious work.

Erik Cobo

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests