Reviewer’s report

Title: Face-to-face individual counseling versus online groups: a study protocol testing two modes of motivational interviewing for improving oral health

Version: 2 Date: 23 May 2015

Reviewer: Falk Schwendicke

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for giving me the chance to review this paper. I attach a pdf with some comments.

To your questions:
1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis?
The authors miss to postulate a hypothesis, and primary outcome definition is currently inadequate.
2. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?
Authors describe multi-level modelling as approach to account for clustering in statistical analysis, which seems adequate.
3. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
Yes.
5. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

Overall, this is a well planned study, dealing with a relevant and interesting issue. However, the outcome definition is not fully clear, and I feel that the authors should strive for a more comprehensive assessment of the intervention: process outcomes are mentioned in the intro when describing the advantages of online MI, but are not evaluated. Costs are not considered at all.

The abstract seems the weakest part of the manuscript and should be thoroughly revised, especially as primary outcome and efficacy measurement are unclear.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests