Reviewer's report

Title: Baseline characteristics, statistical analysis plan and feasibility for the 'Prevention Of Decline in Cognition After Stroke Trial' (PODCAST) trial

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Reviewer: Sarah Pendlebury

Reviewer's report:

The paper has been revised and is now generally clearer. I am not sure of the usual Trials journal guidance, but it would have been helpful to the reviewers if the authors had followed the usual practice of inserting the altered text into their responses. A few points have not been fully addressed in terms of changes to the manuscript.

Previous point 5.
The authors have not provided detail on how dementia was excluded in eligible patients ie how the DSM IV criteria were applied in practice? This needs to be clarified.

Previous point 6.
The authors state that discussion of the dementia risk in the cohort would be better left to the final publication. However, some justification for the statement in Methods, Eligibility that “inclusion and exclusion criteria … were designed to include a population of stroke survivors who were at higher risk of developing cognitive impairment and dementia…” should be given. As it appears at present, the only risk factor listed which would increase dementia risk is age.

Previous point 8.
The authors have answered the question regarding memory problems but the manuscript has not been altered. It would be helpful to readers to have this information in the manuscript. In many studies, a specific question is used rather than subjective judgement of the investigator (this is not necessarily better but the methodology used should be clear).

Previous point 10.
I am not sure why the authors feel that the present paper is not the place to explain briefly the IQCODE methodology especially since readers familiar with the test will be confused as to what was done. My understanding is that informants were asked to compare patients now versus how they were at last follow-up. This is very different from the original study which required a 10-year interval for comparison and should at the very least, be described in the manuscript. Also, I could not see the IQCODE listed with the other cognitive tests under secondary outcomes.