Reviewer’s report

Title: Phase-Based Treatment versus Immediate Trauma-Focused Treatment in Patients with Childhood Trauma-Related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Study Protocol

Version: 0 Date: 06 Dec 2017

Reviewer: Tobias Krieger

Reviewer’s report:

The authors present a study protocol of a randomized controlled trial comparing Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR, 16 sessions) therapy preceded by a stabilization phase (8 sessions Skills Training in Affect and Interpersonal Regulation, STAIR) or only EMDR therapy (16 sessions) for patients suffering from complex PTSD. The study protocol is well-written and most information to make the study reproducible is provided.

However, there are some minor points that I think the authors should address in a revised version of the manuscript.

A limitation of the present study seems to be that if the combined STAIR/EMDR condition shows to be superior compared to the only EMDR condition it is possible that this is because of a mere dose effect. This limitation of the present study should be included. Also how the authors think to address this issue.

Please specify whether the randomization is within or between therapists, i.e., do therapists deliver treatment in both conditions or not?

Page 8: Please provide the information whether the follow-up assessments are from randomization or from the end of treatment. This is important since treatment ends in one group 2 months earlier than in the other group.

Page 12: Introduce abbreviation CAPS-5 when it first appears

The power calculation suggests that the primary endpoint for the given study is at 6-month follow-up. Please state clearly, what the primary endpoint of the study is.

In addition, the resolution of Figure 1 seems to be rather low. Please provide a Figure with a higher resolution.

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Is it essential that this manuscript is seen by an expert statistician? If so, please give your reasons in your report.

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