The authors are to be commended for their clear representation of the challenges of this particular type of trial, and for their transparent reporting of intended interventions as well as of the article's limitations. The issue of potential biases inherent in Type 3 surgical trials is particularly thoughtfully addressed.

The article might benefit from a clearer distinction between methods and results, both in the abstract and the main paper. The authors should ensure that all the planned methods are adequately reflected in the results section. For instance, the micro-costing of research activities is described in admirable detail in the methods section; however, I would also be interested in the outcome of this - for example, could the results section describe whether the costing projections were adequate?

I fully understand the limitations in funding etc. that meant some of the interventions could not be systematically evaluated; nevertheless, the results on the recruitment video and the prize draw are disappointingly short.

- Is there anything more to be said on the recruitment video, even just anecdotally? Or could the authors give some examples of what was contained in the video that the staff found particularly useful? Conveying equipoise is a major challenge for many trials and any insights would be highly transferable.

- Similarly, without any further detail on the effect of the prize draw, I'm not sure it warrants the claim "… and a prize draw ensured adequate follow-up…" as stated in the abstract. At the very least, I would expect a mention e.g. of expected versus actual return rate, or how the return rates compare to similar trials and populations.
Some of the statements made in the abstract weren't immediately clear on first reading (without reference to the main article), in particular the sentence in the results section ending in "…, providing confidence in the use of the baseline measure." Given this is one of the main findings, could this be rephrased to enhance clarity.

Minor comments:

Could you mention the overall duration of recruitment and follow up in the methods section of the main body - currently this is only evident from Figure 1. Incidentally, Figure 1 is erroneously titled "Participant Flow Diagram".

While the language is adequate overall, some errors have crept in presumably during editing, which merit revision (see for instance lines 144/145, lines 149/150, line 159, line 271, as well as various cross-referencing errors). Lines 365-368 are unclear in wording or punctuation.

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