Reviewer's report

Title: Design, planning and implementation lessons learnt from a surgical multi-centre Randomised Controlled Trial

Version: 1 Date: 01 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Doris Lanz

Reviewer's report:

Please note - my line numbers refer to the tracked changes version rather than the clean version.

The distinction between methods and results is now much clearer, and the abstract is much improved in this respect. A few language errors or style issues have been introduced in the edits (see further below).

What I'm still missing is something more in the results related to the costing methodology - e.g. was the assumed hours per recruit adequate? Did you over-cost the study based on your screening assumptions?

Abstract:

Line 34-35 could perhaps still be more accessible. "To ensure integrity of the data, the timing of the baseline assessment was reviewed and investigated." - what was reviewed/investigated? why not "the baseline assesments were reviewed to ensure the timing did not impact on the outcome?"

Similarly, as you do not have the word count to eloborate on "reference-class forecasting" in the abstract, you may wish to revert to the kind of paraphrasing used later on in the body of the manuscript.

Line 45/46: it's not clear enough that you're looking at the timing of the data here.

Line 90: this is now toned down as requested by reviewer 2, but doesn't make sense - do you mean "although there is some evidence"?
Lines 153ff - While I accept the authors' argument that costing is important, some of this added text might sit more comfortably in the Background section, and doesn't link very clearly to the original text on CRN costing, which now seems underdeveloped.

Note there is now no longer a reference to the Box 1 within the text.

Line 266 - review language (tense)

Line 302 - referenced publication is from 2016, not 2013

Lines 381-384 - better but wording could be further improved (e.g. "of the original 350 recruitment target" sounds awkward)

Line 397 - review language.

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