Reviewer’s report

Title: A feasibility study of the Mini-AFTER telephone intervention for the management of fear of recurrence in breast cancer survivors: a mixed-methods study protocol

Version: 0 Date: 16 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Melanie Morris

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A feasibility study of the Mini-AFTER telephone intervention for the management of fear of recurrence in breast cancer survivors: a mixed-methods study protocol

Thank you for asking me to review this manuscript. It is an interesting topic, involving an often-neglected step in the development of an intervention: understanding how those who will implement it respond to it. There were a few aspects of the paper that I thought needed clarification, and these are detailed below, but this was generally a very well-written, thoroughly thought-out study.

Main issues:

* "a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study" - this study design is mentioned several times, but never defined for the non-specialist (this journal must have a wide readership!). It becomes clearer over the course of the article what is meant, but a clear explanation and references at its first mention will help

* Similar issue with "eight point adaptive quadrature procedure" (p.9 line1): explain and/or give references

* Say more in the design section (Phase 1) about other variables being collected: age, gender, seniority(?), as I assume these will be adjusted for or stratified by in the analysis of the survey responses?

* More should be said in the limitations section e.g. about the potential biases that might impact the findings from the possible low response rate, and by only recruiting from the Breast Cancer Care Nursing Network

* It would be beneficial to the study if other sources of nurses could be found to take part in the study. Have the authors considered emailing other nursing organisations, websites/newsletters that target nurses, all hospitals that have a breast cancer MDT? If they have and decided not to, this should be detailed in the paper
Minor Issues:

Background
* I would move the end of the first paragraph, to the end of the Background: from "This…" (p. 3 line 10) up to "…intervention." (p.3 line 20)
* Reference the Delphi Study (p.3 line 29)
* The acronym AFTER needs to be explained where it first appears; suggest moving the two sentences from "The acronym…” (p.4 line 3) to "…symptoms [16,17]" (p.4 line 10) to p.3 line 59 after "…levels of FoR."

Design
* Say more about the RCT planned
* How was the sample size of 20 nurses to interview determined?

Methods
* p.8 line 17: give details here of the eligibility criteria. These should also be included in the online survey in case ineligible nurses try mistakenly to fill in the survey
* The purposive sampling is described, but it would be useful to know more about how the criteria listed will be allocated among the 20 participants. What groups will there be e.g. number of years qualified: over 5 vs less than 5 years etc? Is there an aim of 4 nurses with each of the 5 criteria?
* I assume the nurses who test the survey will not be eligible for the main study. How many will test it?

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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