Reviewer's report

Title: Development of a communication aid for explaining hypertrophic cardiomyopathy genetic test results

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Reviewer: Zainab Samaan

Reviewer's report:

The authors provide information on the development of a communication aid used to inform individuals at risk of HCM in the era of next generation sequencing and the availability of a wealth of genetic data that may not have a direct impact on the disease pathology. The authors planned a 4-stage process starting with the development of the communication aid (a booklet with text and graphic depiction of data related to genetic testing and results) and leading up to a randomized controlled trial to assess the use of the newly developed tool in genetic counselling for HCM. This manuscript described the first two stages.

Specific comments

1. Introduction is well written. However at the end, the last paragraph contains contradictory messages: "cardiac genetic counselors are skilled in delivering complex genetic information in a simple and sensitive way". Then next sentence "given the challenges in effectively communicating HCM genetic test results…” If the existing practice of counsellor is effective, why develop a new communication aid?

2. Methods

   a. Please use an appropriate reporting guideline to describe and report this study (see the equator network for a list of these guidelines that is best fitting for your study design).

   b. Literature search was mentioned in several sections of the manuscript as one avenue to establishing the communication aid, however there are no details provided on the literature search methods or findings. This should be provided.

   c. Figure one should include labels for each stage such as development, pilot…etc.
d. On page 5 under specialized multidisciplinary team, it is unclear where the usual practice ends and the new intervention begins. Please specify clearly the differences between the 2.

e. Stage 1: more details are needed for this stage, what were the topics that were discussed by the team, how did the team identify these topics, list of questions discussed, what were the contents at the starting point and how were these modified, what evidence from literature was identified and how was that incorporating into the intervention? A list of the questions/themes/content material is needed to clarify the development process.

f. Stage 2: as per stage 1 more details needed on the process of the piloting and a copy of the booklet should be included.

g. "key design features" of what stage?

h. "segregation studies" please define for the reader.

i. Sample recruitment is also lacking important details, how many people were approached, did they receive the aid following the consent procedure?, did they also receive "usual practice".

3. Results: most of the text provided pertains to the positive reception and feedback of the 12 participants, the paragraph related to "key issues…" stated that the pilot test highlighted several challenges. Please list the challenges clearly here.

4. Under conclusions, please describe how this pilot study will help in the planned RCT.

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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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