Reviewer’s report

Title: Study protocol for Enhancing Parenting in Cancer (EPIC): Development and evaluation of a brief psycho-educational intervention to support parents with cancer who have young children

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Reviewer: Juliana Diniz

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In the manuscript entitled "Study protocol for Enhancing Parenting in Cancer (EPIC): Development and evaluation of a brief psycho-educational intervention to support parents with cancer who have young children" the authors describe the study protocol for an intervention that aims to improve parenting during stressful situations. In general, the protocol is well described and is of interest to the readership of this journal. Major and minor issues along the text are pointed below and should be addressed by the authors before acceptance for publication.

Major issues

Introduction

The description that starts at page 7, line 19 seems to be more appropriate for the Methods section.

Methods

The authors describe that the protocol comprises a literature review that has already been completed but do not show the results of this review. It is a bit confusing as the following steps depend on the results of this review. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to show the review's results and describe subsequent planning in line with those results?

Please justify the sample sizes chosen for the development and piloting phases. I understand that at this phase a proper power size calculation is not appropriate but there is probably a rationale behind the choice of sample sizes at this context.

No information on the effect of the intervention upon children will be collected at this phase, is that right? If so, please justify.

The sample sizes aimed at this phase do not seem appropriate for the statistical analysis described by the authors. Isn't it more appropriate to work only with descriptive and qualitative analysis at this point?
Minor issues

Introduction

The following sentence in the introduction needs correction for better understanding: "In a randomized trial, mothers with breast cancer old child received…" (page 6, line 59)

The Aims are described in a bit confusing manner. While the authors describe that only the feasibility study will be the aim of this manuscript and not the development phase, at the Methods section the protocol for the development of the intervention is also described. I also suggest that aims and rationale to be presented as different sections (the description of Aims is followed for a justification that is better suited as Rationale).

Methods

It is not clear if the following information will be based on participants report or on medical records: mental health treatment history; presence of major medical comorbidities; time since cancer treatment commenced; nature of cancer diagnosis (tumour stream, stage); and nature of cancer treatment. If it were to be based on medical records, how will the researchers be allowed access to those records? If it were to be based on subjects report, how do the researchers plan to deal with missing and inconsistent information provided by participants?

What is the estimated time participants might take to fill out the questionnaires?

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