Reviewer’s report

Title: A randomised feasibility study to investigate the impact of education and the addition of prompts on the sedentary behaviour of office workers.

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Reviewer: Charlotte Edwardson

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written article. I do not have any major comments regarding this manuscript, just a few minor suggestions/changes that I feel are needed prior to publication.

Background:

Only 1 reference is provided for the statement 'High levels of sedentary behaviour (SB) have been associated with contributing to the risk of developing a number of long-term health conditions including cancer; cardiovascular disease; diabetes; obesity; musculoskeletal problems; muscle degeneration; osteoporosis; and depression' and the reference that is provided only looked at the association between sitting time and mortality.

Line 62 - the authors state that the risk between sedentary behaviour and chronic disease 'is independent to the amount of physical activity....'. Given that evidence has now emerged showing that very high levels of physical activity can attenuate and eliminate the risk I would suggest being more cautious with this statement e.g., may be independent.

Reference 15 and 16 appear to be the same.

Methods:

The authors talk about a 'control' group and 'intervention' group but it seems like both groups received an intervention with the only difference being that the 'intervention' group also received hourly prompts. It seems like this study is testing two types of intervention and whether one intervention may be better than the other rather than a true control vs intervention design. A control group is usually standard practice or no intervention at all. What the 'control' group received (i.e., education) in this study was not standard practice therefore I would suggest re-wording throughout to make this clearer. In line with this comment I feel that the title may need changing to reflect this e.g., 'A randomised feasibility study to investigate the impact of education and the addition of prompts on the sedentary behaviour of office workers.'
Line 109 - it states that the clusters were determined by geographical location in the office - does this mean that they were all in the same office? A clearer explanation of this would be helpful to judge contamination risk.

Line 141 - the inclusion criteria states that office workers were included if they primarily sedentary computer based activities - it would be useful to state exactly what this means e.g., was it more than 50% of their work hours?

Line 140-142 - were there any criteria around number of days that the participants had to work e.g., a minimum of 3 days/week?

Line 190-191 - Do you have a justification for having a minimum of 1 workday given that this was a workplace intervention?

Results:

Line 219 - it would be helpful to know how many people were approached for the study/how many it was advertised to? This should also be included in figure 1.

Figure 1 is based on an individually randomised trial - please make it clear that this was cluster and had 2 clusters of which 1 was 'control' and 1 'intervention'

It would also be useful to know how many people were in the offices in total to know what % took part in the study (this links to some of the focus groups comments about people feeling uncomfortable about standing i.e., if not everyone was involved then this would make sense)

When you examined differences in behaviour between time points did you adjust for anything? E.g., baseline values, change in work hours etc

Line 341 - It's stated that 'Comparison between the control and intervention groups for all key outcome measures showed a tendency for the intervention group to perform better in terms of a lower proportion of time spent sitting during work hours, less time spent sitting in prolonged (>20 minute and >30 minute) events, and more frequent events of shorter duration during working hours across all 3 time periods. Independent t-tests found these differences between groups to be not significant [p>0.05] at any time point (Table 2).’ Which is correct but it is misleading because if you look at the comparison between change in these behaviours between the groups it appears that the 'control' group actually did better than the 'intervention' group e.g., change in total sitting workhours for the 'control' group at the intervention measurement period was ~6.5% reduction and the 'intervention' group was ~2.4% reduction. I understand that you were saying that the intervention group had more favourable values at all time points but it's the change that is important so I would suggest rewording this.
Table 2 - Given that the activPAL measures standing and stepping it would be helpful for the readers to have these outputs - at least at baseline

Discussion:

Line 366 - did you have any feedback forms from the education session?

Line 368-370 - it's stated that the prompts were found to be a low cost, feasible method but this sentence would benefit from more interpretation from the study results i.e., yes they were low cost etc but probably need more variation (as some commented on the fact that they knew what was coming and they didn't read them) and it appears from the behaviour change results that they didn't have additional impact on top of the education (i.e., control group appear to make a larger change)

Line 436 - It's unclear how the authors came to the conclusion that 27 participants per group are needed to detect significant differences

Line 439 - I'm not sure I understand what the authors are getting at regarding cluster randomisation, as cluster randomisation would be extremely important for a workplace intervention compared to individual randomisation. What is important for this type of intervention would be to recruit as many in the cluster as possible, particularly if individuals are self-conscious with standing more at work and regularly breaking up sitting

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