**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** A Mobile Phone-based Program to Promote Healthy Behaviors among Adults with Prediabetes: Study Protocol for a Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 25 May 2017

**Reviewer:** Christine Bond

**Reviewer's report:**

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting study which is addressing an important problem.

I have however several concerns that would need to be addressed before consideration of the paper for publication.

1. Firstly it is clear that this is in fact a protocol not a report of a study and this should be clearer in the title. Secondly I think it would be helpful to refer the authors to the recently published CONSORT extension reporting checklist (Sandra M Eldridge, Claire L Coleman, Michael J Campbell, Christine M Bond, Sally Hopewell, Lehana Thabane, Gillian A Lancaster on behalf of the PAFS consensus group. CONSORT 2010 Statement: extension to randomised pilot and feasibility trials BMJ. 2016; 355: i5239).

Although this is, as it says, a reporting checklist, the study protocol has to support the checklist items to be met when the study is reported. At the moment that is not the case.

Some detailed comments follow.

**Title**

1. The title needs to make clear this is a study protocol

**Abstract**

2. The Background feels quite long. It is not exactly clear (as there is no aim ) that this is a pilot study for a subsequent definitive study.
Method

3. The primary outcomes are not those you would expect of a pilot study as they seem to be efficacy of changing the mediating factors that might result in behaviour change.

4. The outcomes do not fully map onto the study objectives listed in the main text of the paper.

Main text

Background

5. This clearly spells out the problem. The dual use of pre diabetes and occasional use of the term people at risk is confusing and a single term throughout the paper would help.

6. I found the text on page 2 of the background lines 16-50 helpful but the following text on the JOOL was rather complex and I really wonder if people would find the JOOL of value. Of course that is what early feasibility and pilot work is about but I would have expected some earlier study showing how that the components of this complex intervention can work together in a way that is acceptable to participants. This would not be about effectiveness but acceptability. It seems premature to go straight into a randomised pilot.

7. The link between the pilot work and the planned subsequent study is not explicit.

8. The study objectives are not what would be expected of a pilot trial. The first is about efficacy which a pilot trial should not be addressing (see the CONSORT extension for pilot studies paper). The second is about acceptability and feasibility but details of feasibility such as confirming size of likely population, getting estimates of consent, recruitment, retention, completion of measures, fidelity to intervention are not measured.

9. The study eligibility criteria could probably just include the exclusion of being involved in another similar study rather an the inclusion of non engagement

10. The description of JOOLS plus should make clear the digital scales is internet enabled

11. The Discussion feels more like the background. The authors could consider having some predetermined progression criteria which they would apply to decide whether or not to progress to the subsequent definitive study.
12. As I note this study has already been funded the funders should be notified if the protocol changes, and likewise the IRB.

13. In summary this is an interesting behaviour change initiative in important health area but I think more non randomised feasibility work should be undertaken prior to a pilot RCT.

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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