Reviewer’s report

Title: Enabling Aboriginal dental assistants to apply fluoride varnish for school-children in communities with a high Aboriginal population in New South Wales, Australia: A study protocol for a feasibility study

Version: 0 Date: 23 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Jonathan Broadbent

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The proposed research protocol in interesting and addresses a important issue. Oral health among Aboriginal children in Australia is poor, and the investigators are applying a new angle (using dental assistants for preventive care delivery) to a well-established caries-preventive intervention (NaF varnish application). My comments on the protocol are minor:

1. It was unclear to which surfaces of the teeth this Duraphat varnish will be applied.

2. Ages of the children was unclear - at 0.4 mL Duraphat, this might mean not recommended for smaller children. According to my reading, a substantial proportion of Aboriginal children ~8% might be classified as underweight.

3. How will the quantity of varnish be controlled at 0.4 mL? Is package fluoride varnish to be used? I am aware that this is sometimes produced in 0.4 mL packages.

4. I suggest that these dental assistants are not actually being used as assistants, and so should be termed as dental auxiliaries, which is the nomenclature I am familiar with for this situation. Once the assistant becomes the operator they are no longer an assistant. In the UK, for example, such an operator might be termed an 'extended duty dental nurse'.

5. 'Preventive' not 'preventative'. Why the unnecessary syllable? Both are used in the manuscript.

6. Lines 152-167 describe some studies where assistants have been used as auxiliary operators, but nothing is said about the success or failure of the actual interventions.

7. Line 171 I suggest the 'ability' not the 'efficacy' is being tested here

8. The consent form is awfully complicated. Will this be administered by the dental assistant in question?
9. The CRA form needs attention. The image illustrating Sillness & Loe's method is not reproduce well, and there are some typos (e.g. 'fluoridate varnish').

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