Reviewer's report

Title: Reporting Quality of Pilot Clinical Trials in Chronic Kidney Disease Patients on Hemodialysis: A Methodological Survey

Version: 0 Date: 21 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Matthew Miller

Reviewer's report:

Consider switching "chronic kidney disease" to CKD - it's a well known acronym and how it's usually referred to in literature

Page 3 Paragraph 1, line 6: "increases as kidney function declines"

Page 3 Paragraph , line 12: "best address vascular access problems, fatigue, risk of mortality, and cardiovascular disease, and to improve dialysis adequacy"

Page 4, paragraph 1, line 1: "screening, recruitment, coordination, acceptability, safety…"

Page 4, paragraph 2: CONSORT published in 2010 with revision in 2016, please make explicit in this paragraph and refer to which one is being used in the study (becomes clearer later on but should be well understood up front)

Page 4, paragraph 2 and 3: somewhat repetitive, consider combining paragraphs to be more concise

Search strategy: nicely done and explained

Page 6, paragraph 1, line 1: please clarify how completeness differs from number of items (primary vs secondary outcomes)

Page 6, paragraph 2, line 5: regarding the study being a prelude to a definitive study, this appears self-reported and not one of the CONSORT items. Unclear if this has ever been validated. Also, may not be self-reported in original articles as might be assumed by authors given that is the underlying purpose to pilot or feasibility studies

Page 7, paragraph 1, line 4: setting all N/A to yes may make things appear better than they are (which is acceptable given the purpose of the paper is to see if reporting is worse than it should be so biased away from expected result). Another potential option could've been eliminating this question in analysis which would've changed denominator but would've made analysis more difficult, so not a definitive requirement, just an observation

Page 8, paragraph 1, line 9: clarify number of significant digits used
Page 8, paragraph 2, line 4: Similar to previous, not clear this is a validated item and may not be explicit in manuscripts as assumed given nature of pilot studies

Page 8, paragraph 3, line 1: state max score (can be found by going to actual questionnaire but will be easier to understand if in text

Page 8, paragraph 3, line 3: reword and shorten sentence

Page 9, paragraph 2, line 5: "7.9%" appears incorrect (not in table)

Page 9, paragraph 4, line 1: "one of the few" - either state that there are none that you have identified, or cite the ones that do exist. The following may be one you can quote

Quantity and Reporting Quality of Kidney Research
Markos Kyriakos Tomidis Chatzimanouil, Louise Wilkens and Hans-Joachim Anders
JASN January 2019, 30 (1) 13-22; DOI: https://doi.org/10.1681/ASN.2018050515

Page 10, paragraph 1, line "previously, reporting quality issues have been identified" - which issues?

Page 10, paragraph 2 is a bit repetitive and can likely be shortened

Page 10, paragraph 2, line 12: 19.5% figure different than 17.4% listed on page 8

Page 10, paragraph 2, line 12: what percentage of overall trials in other fields indicate that they go on to larger studies (is this consistent with other literature?)

Page 11, paragraph 1: mentions that studies need to adhere to reporting but some questions (such as 22 which refers to the interpretation being consistent with pilot trial objectives and findings) are at 97% reporting which seems reassuring

Page 11, paragraph 1: states what you believe it's critical for journals to do going forward; please provide some suggestions on how this might be accomplished

Page 11, paragraph 2, line 3: "though it should be noted that we included international studies" is not necessary
Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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Were you mentored through this peer review?
Yes: Catherine Clase, MB, MSc (HRM), FRCPC, Associate Professor, McMaster University