Author’s response to reviews

Title: A Feasibility Study of an Intervention for Structured Preparation before Detoxification in Alcohol Dependence: the SPADe trial protocol.

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Version: 2 Date: 07 Mar 2019

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We would like once more to thank you the reviewer for the positive and detailed comments. We hope that we have now successfully addressed all of them. New changes are tracked.

Comments on: "A Feasibility Study of an Intervention for Structured Preparation before detoxification in Alcohol Dependence: the SPADe trial protocol." Thank you for the answers and comments. It is an important and interesting paper, but some points still need elucidation.

1. Introduction: a) The evolution of the themes got better. However, the first paragraph has a number of important epidemiological data, but they have not been well connected, only placed in the text.

Response: We have revisited the first paragraph of the introduction and we tried to expand and link the facts together in order to tell a clear narrative of the magnitude of the problem of harmful and dependent drinking and their consequences to the individual and the society.
2. **Introduction**: b) the introduction continues to suggest that detoxification is the cause of the alcoholic patient's harm, failing to consider the complexity of the disease and treatment. I do not think it's a good strategy to introduce the study. It is more plausible to understand that detoxification is not enough and needs to be improved, changed or combined with other treatments/strategies.

Response: We appreciate reviewer’s concerns. We have tried to tone down any suggestion of causality, to emphasise the associative nature of the existing evidence and emphasise the importance of aiming for long-term sustainable outcomes.

3. **Aims and objectives**: a) "Author: The key research question is: can we design a large scale, randomised controlled trial (RCT), that will answer whether SPADe is more effective than usual care in helping adults to maintain longer periods of alcohol abstinence? The feasibility trial will compare the use of SPADe with treatment as usual in the participating sites and will enable us to do the following". I do not think the study compares SPADe with TAU. But it compares SPADe + TAU versus TAU (clinical effectiveness of SPADe as an adjunct to Treatment as Usual (TAU), against TAU).

Response: We thank the reviewer for the comment. We have made the relevant additions.

4. **Aims and objectives**: b) The more specific objectives and the future plans can be discussed in the discussion topic.

Response: Thank you for the suggestion. We have moved the relevant paragraph in the discussion section of the manuscript.

6. **Methods**: a) Figure 1: Author: "Figure 1: Recruitment Flow Diagram": The figure is not just about recruitment. B) Figure 1: Author: "Allocated to Intervention (n=25) * Receive SPADe for 6 weeks prior to detox". It is not more clear use prior to TAU?

Response: We have made the relevant correction.

7. **Stage 3**: Author: "Thus our approach recognizes that "the relationship between causal mechanisms and their effects is not fixed, but contingent" (on individual interpretations)." Please enter the reference.
We have removed this text form the protocol, for clarity, since this did not come from a reference. In light of the below comment, we felt that this was too detailed for the protocol.

8. Stage 3: The item of qualitative study is extensive and sometimes unclear.

Thank you for this comment. We have tried to give as much information to be clear about the study aims and design in the protocol as possible. For clarity, we introduce sub-headings to the qualitative study section of the protocol.

9. Author: "Completion of recruitment is expected in April 2018." Is the recruitment over?

Response: Yes the recruitment was completed in June 2018. The relevant change was made.

10. Formatting errors. (list of abbreviations, points together).

Response: List has been completed.