Reviewer’s report

Title: COMMENTARY: Should treatment effects be estimated in pilot and feasibility studies?

Version: 0 Date: 23 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Claire Cameron

Reviewer’s report:

This is very interesting, informative and important paper. I enjoyed reading it and I think it will be a valuable contribution to the area of pilot and feasibility studies.

I have virtually no concerns. One point that I felt needed more clarity was on page 6 (second to last paragraph starting with "Both when requiring……"). Here you discuss the standard deviation of the treatment effect in a small pilot study and you say that it is "likely to be underestimated owing to the nature of the Chi-square distribution" and provide a reference. Normally the issue with small samples is the increased variation (compared to a larger similar study) which results in the wider confidence intervals as you have also discussed in other parts of the paper. I am not sure where this piece of information fits in the bigger picture of estimating treatment effects from pilot studies. Does this underestimation ameliorate the effects on standard deviation of a small sample? I suspect that mentioning the chi-square distribution here assumes a knowledge of statistical theory that may not be present in many readers and it may just muddy the waters of making your very good point. Is it possible to make clearer what the relevance is of this paragraph to the rest of the work? To me, it seems to be out on its own.

A very minor point: page 5 line 42 (middle of the second to last paragraph) there is a sentence that has "… that at an effect of least the MID…", I think there should be another 'at' in there "… that at an effect of at least the MID…",

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