Author’s response to reviews

Title: Extra upper limb practice after stroke: a feasibility study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Editor: I have two further additions to request before this manuscript can be accepted.

1. Please confirm and state in the data analysis that paired 95% CIs have been calculated to account for the paired data pre-post.
   - Yes, the 95% CIs have been calculated to account for the paired data pre-post. Data analysis now reads: “For clinical outcomes, paired between-time differences (Week 4 minus Week 0) are presented as mean difference (95% CI).”

2. The list of measures taken at W0 need to be described with more detail on p5-6 as to what they are measuring and the units used so that the reader can interpret the numbers in Table 1.
   - The list of measures are now also included in text: “Age (year), sex (number male), time since stroke (days), side of hemiplegia (number right), living situation (lives alone), education (attended university), cognition (Mini Mental Status Examination, 0-30) (29), unilateral special neglect (Albert’s Line Cancellation Test, number of lines left uncrossed) (30), loss of light touch sensation (none/some/complete), spasticity (Tardieu Scale Quality of Muscle Reaction, 0-5) (31), contracture (range of motion at the wrist and elbow), complexity of rehabilitation needs (Rehabilitation Complexity Scale – Extended, 0-20) (32), and ability to pick up a cup unaided (number) and walk unaided (number) were collected at baseline to describe the sample.”

3. How many therapists were involved in the study? They were trained in techniques. Were they given training to take consistent measurements? Page 5&6.
   - The following sentence on page 6 has been modified: “Occupational therapists overseeing the extra upper limb practice all had experience in neurological rehabilitation and were trained in task-specific motor training and the trial intervention prior to study commencement.”
   - The following sentence has been added to page 6: “One therapist was involved in overseeing the extra upper limb practice, with incidental support from two additional therapists.”
Therapists were trained to take consistent measurements, as per the sentence on page 4/5: “Outcome measures were collected by occupational therapists trained in the procedures who were not blinded to the aims of the study.

4. Please add a sample size section before data analysis to give a rationale as to the numbers you expected to recruit over the time period.

- A sample size section has been added:
  “Sample Size
  Due to the nature of a feasibility study, a formal sample size calculation was not performed (36). We aimed to recruited 20 participants as this was considered an adequate number to assess the feasibility (37).”

5. Discussion
   - is this extra exercise feasible in normal practice running with current resources?
   - We have now amended the discussion to include the sentence:
     “This study provided evidence that extra practice was feasible, however this was not provided within the usual resources provided within the inpatient rehabilitation unit.”

Reviewer #1: Thank you for sending this to me for re-review, I appreciate your amendments.

Minor comment: P7 Outcome measures – Feasibility

Second sentence - I think the description of calculation of feasibility of recruitment should be the proportion of *enrolled* (rather than "eligible and enrolled") patients from the *screened* (rather than "eligible") population, as the calculation is 20 (enrolled) out of 212 (screened)
- The second sentence has been corrected and now reads: “Feasibility of recruitment was determined by calculating the proportion of enrolled patients from the population who were screened for eligibility.”

Reviewer #2: Thanks for addressing the questions raised. I feel all comments and suggestions have been addressed.

- Thank you.