Reviewer’s report

Title: Feasibility of alcohol screening and brief intervention in primary health care in Kazakhstan: study protocol of a pilot cluster randomized trial

Version: 0 Date: 06 Oct 2019

Reviewer: Jemma Hawkins

Reviewer's report:

This is a protocol for a pilot cluster randomised trial which clearly describes the aims, design and measures to be used.

My main query and request for additional information is with regard the training provided for professionals who will be delivering the intervention, further details about the training provided (what does it entail, who provides it) would be useful, along with any mention of how this training will be evaluated in terms of feasibility of delivering the intervention and fidelity of delivery (is the training sufficient for delivering the intervention as intended, etc). A common issue with interventions based on / informed by Motivational Interviewing is that training provided is rarely sufficient for intervention deliverers to be able to implement the intervention with adherence to MI principles, and it would be useful for the authors to acknowledge this and comment on how their study will take this into consideration to inform any future implementation of the intervention and evaluation of it.

In the section on study outcomes measures (and the associated table) it is not entirely clear what things will be measured by what methods, as this jumps around a bit. Seeing as the table breaks down the key RE-AIM facets and what will be measured, it would be helpful if the study outcome measures section instead described the measures assessed by each method in turn (screening tools, CRF, provider questionnaires, patient focus group, provider focus groups), or perhaps if the table had an additional column indicating the method via which each outcome measure will be assessed.

In addition, further details about the proposed approach to analysis of qualitative data would be useful, under data management the authors refer to both content and thematic analysis of the focus group data, and under statistical analysis other qualitative data are mentioned (from the CRF I assume) which will be subject to narrative analysis. Firstly, it would be useful to know how both content and thematic analysis will be used together with the focus group data, as well as what the coding process will be (how many researchers will code the data, will any data be double coded, how will disagreements between coders be addressed... etc). Further detail on how the narrative analysis will be conducted would also be useful.

It seems as though some of the research objectives will be answered using data from more than one method of data collection, and as such some discussion of how data will be triangulated for this purpose would also be useful.

Additional minor edits:

On Pg2 Lines 10-12 in the abstract the authors describe health care units being randomised to 'interventional .... and control group'. This should be edited to state 'the intervention or control group'.
On Pg4 Lines 16-17, the authors refer to 'good performance' of the AUDIT and AUDIT-C for use as screening tools in ASBI - it would be good to provide a bit more information here, are you referring to good reliability and validity of the tool, or something else?

Throughout there are inconsistencies in spellings which need correcting, e.g. use of both 'randomized' and 'randomised'

**Level of interest**  
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**  
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments
which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal

Were you mentored through this peer review?

No