Reviewer’s report

Title: A study protocol to assess the feasibility of conducting an evaluation trial of the ADVANCE integrated intervention to address both substance use and intimate partner abuse perpetration to men in substance use treatment

Version: 0 Date: 12 May 2019

Reviewer: Geetha Gopalan

Reviewer's report:

Overall, the study protocol is well-written and organized. This study addresses an important unmet need, specifically services for those individuals struggling with substance abuse and intimate partner abuse (IPA).

The following comments are intended to strengthen the current manuscript.

Background

* Page 4, line 3: the authors indicate that there are few instances of appropriate referral, treatment completion, and attendance/uptake among those receiving IPA services who also struggle with substance abuse. More information providing examples of such information would be helpful to provide greater context.

* Page 4, line 12-27: This section is very thin on details and as such, requires more fleshing out. The authors indicate that "integrated interventions to address both IPA and substance use show some promise and make clinical and economic sense." More information is needed to clarify specifically what authors are referring to in terms of "promise" and "clinical/economic sense". Also, given that some integrated substance abuse and IPA programs already exist, why is a new integrated program needed? What are the limitations or gaps in prior integrated services that the current intervention addresses? In short, what is the rationale in terms of how ADVANCE contributes the science behind such integrated interventions? More information is also needed regarding the operationalization and justification for a "multifactorial approach", the importance of concurrent IPA and substance abuse treatment, and more "holistic" strategies. Finally, there is no information on the theoretical basis for the ADVANCE. Although authors detail the intervention in the methods section, it would be important in this section as well as to summarize the various components/strategies of ADVANCE, the theoretical justification for each component/strategies, prior research behind ADVANCE or its components/strategies, as well as clear explication regarding how ADVANCE innovates within the limited field of integrated IPA and substance abuse treatment. I would strongly encourage the authors to utilize the TIDieR template for intervention description and replication checklist and guide (http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-
guidelines/tidier/), which could be included as an additional document and referred to either in the background or methods section.

Methods

* Page 5, lines 23-34: More information is needed to describe the setting and participants. How many "sites" in total will be recruited? How many participants per site and cycle (referred to later in the methods section)? What defines a "cycle"? I would indicate here that n = 108 total male participants will be recruited, as well as n = 76 female current or former partners (as indicated later in the sample size section).

* Page 6, lines 1-13: the exclusionary criteria appears to ensure that those cases which are most imminent in terms of risk and/or hostility are likely to be screened out, (excludes cases with restraining order, current court cases, pending child protection hearings). It would be important to address in the limitations what this means in terms of prospective findings and generalizability? It would also be helpful for authors to articulate the rationale behind the exclusion criteria.

* Page 7, lines 14-15: What is the rationale for excluding those men who indicate this is their first appointment?

* Page 9: lines 14-24: This is the first time authors mention the term "cycle" - more information regarding what this means, how it is operationalized and how many cycles.

* Page 9: lines 48-59: the information provided here on the Behaviour Change Wheel and the COM-B model is insufficient - more information should be provided explaining the theoretical background as well as existing evidence that the use of such concepts would be effective in addressing IPA. Finally, it would be helpful to the reader if authors could articulate which theoretical concepts underscore each ADVANCE treatment component.

* Page 10, Lines 1-20: is the 12 week group intervention compulsory? This should be clarified either way.

* Page 11, Line 7: Authors indicate "Group sessions will be recorded..." Audio or video recording? Video is indicated later on page 12 - it would be helpful to have this information here as well.

* Page 12, Lines 1-27: More information is needed regarding what constitutes Treatment as Usual (e.g., individual/group/family counseling, 12-step programs, etc.)

* Page 13, Line 5: extra word "the" should be deleted: "of the attending the intervention..."

* Page 14, lines 14-51: Authors indicate that the AUDIT and DUDIT measures will only be included at baseline - what is the rationale for not included both these measures at post-test as well?
Page 22, lines 19-21: What is the rationale behind the statement "It is estimated that around 70% of current or former female partners…"

Page 23, Line 1-24: More information is needed regarding what specific data and what specific sources to facilitate the economic analysis portion of the study - how will these data be computed?

Page 23, Lines 27-40: It would be helpful for the reader if authors could provide an example of their proposed qualitative analysis strategy "Framework analysis".

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Quality of written English
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