Author’s response to reviews

Title: A controlled pilot trial of a nurse-led intervention (Mini-AFTERc) to manage fear of cancer recurrence in patients affected by breast cancer

Authors:

Calum McHale (ctm2@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Susanne Cruickshank (susanne.cruickshank@stir.ac.uk)

Claire Torrens (c.e.torrens@stir.ac.uk)

Jo Armes (jo.armes@surrey.ac.uk)

Deborah Fenlon (d.r.fenlon@swansea.ac.uk)

Elspeth Banks (elspeth.banks@gmail.com)

Tom Kelsey (twk@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Gerald Humphris (gmh4@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 27 Feb 2020

Author’s response to reviews:

1. With regards to the control sites and the intervention sites, are you recording what the standard treatment is? As far as I am aware this can vary a lot across sites in terms of the amount of follow up care that patients will receive. I think this could be worth recording and comparing.

Thank you for this question. Recent evidence from our research team indicated that follow-up care for people diagnosed with breast cancer is highly variable, with no standardised approach in the UK (Cruickshank and Barber, 2019). Therefore, we agree with the reviewer that understanding exactly what follow-up care means at each site is an essential consideration when comparing intervention and control sites. As part of developing bespoke recruitment approaches at each site, we have worked closely with site staff to understand their follow-up practices, this included detailed recording of their standard operating procedures and processes.

----

2. Page 15 describes the screening process: "Screening includes the Fear of Cancer Recurrence 4-item (FCR4) measure (27) and participant demographical information; age (in years), cancer treatments received, education, employment and living situation.” The authors responded that the demographic information is collected to assess whether the two groups are similar and who benefits most from the intervention. The way this is worded in the paper implies that participants are being screened for eligibility on the demographic measures. Is this the case?
Thank you for highlighting this. Eligibility is based on the score produced from the FCR4, not demographic information. We agree that the current sentence does not make this clear. We have modified this sentence in the manuscript to read:

“Screening will be conducted with the Fear of Cancer Recurrence 4-item (FCR4) measure. Participant demographical information, including age (in years), cancer treatments received, education, employment and living situation, will also be collected during screening but eligibility will not depend on this information.”