

DIFFICULTIES IN RUNNING A RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL IN THE REAL WORLD OF SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN DENMARK



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170 employees

Children, youth & families, elderly, disabled, employment, integration and labour market

BACKGROUND

Strong call for knowledge on what works

RCTs not common in social sciences in Denmark

Research grant from Ministry of Social Affairs: 3.5 mio DKK
(470.000 EUR – 665.000 USD)

INTERVENTIONS

The two most commonly used interventions

§ 52.3.2 and 52.3.3 in the Law of Social Services

Statistics Denmark 2008:

Family therapy: 9000 families

Practical home support: 4000 families

Both complex interventions

Variability from municipality to municipality

ETHICS

Two interventions with the same target population

No treatment as usual

Families not blinded to intervention

Blinded assessment and analyses

Municipalities accepted the study

Contact person in each municipality

STUDY START

Study started in June 2009

6 municipalities

Plan was to recruit 150 families by the end of 2010

PROBLEMS...

After 6 months (December 2009) only 9 families randomised
Questionnaire measuring fidelity

The two interventions were overlapping too much
-therapists educated in family therapy

Randomisation was not always followed

Resistance against randomisation from case workers and
therapists

Recruitment through caseworkers

REACTION...

Interviewed municipalities

Definitions of the two interventions

5 municipalities accepted - 1 withdrew

Estimation of expected number of families

Municipalities accepted

Meetings – explaining importance of randomisation

Seminars

MORE PROBLEMS...

Summer 2010 (one year in)

23 families

Not as much overlap between interventions

One municipality was considering leaving the study

Meetings with 4 different local areas

They started recruiting families 😊

One municipality (Copenhagen) not recruiting at all

Meetings

No change 😞

REACTION...

Created brochures with information on the study

For caseworkers (high jobturnaround)

For families

More meetings....

Call out for new municipalities

One extra municipality in the study

NOW... MAY 2011

7 municipalities

57 families randomised

9 dropouts

Interventions are still being mixed

Still resistance against randomisation

High job turnaround for caseworkers

Difficulty getting posttest measures

No more money ☹ Considering to stop/carry on

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

It is not always as easy as it looks!

It takes a lot of time and effort to make caseworkers and therapists accept a randomised study

Even though municipalities agree to participate in a study they cannot force frontworkers to recruit families

We have to be creative 😊

THANKS

ANY QUESTIONS?