

Electro-acupuncture (EA) treatment for women with chronic pelvic pain (CPP): a three-arm randomised controlled pilot study using a mixed methods approach

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Burdens of Chronic Pelvic Pain

- Societal: UK estimated annual healthcare cost at 200 million Euros
- Personal: disrupted sleep & sex life, depression, anxiety, fatigue
- Social: Difficulty conducting social activities
- Employment: Fear of losing paid work

Acupuncture & Chronic Pain

Effective for other chronic pain conditions e.g. headache, back, neck & shoulder pain

Vickers, AJ. Arch Intern Med. 2012

Haake, M. Arch Intern Med. 2007

Hypothesis

Electro-acupuncture (EA) treatment
alleviates pain, improves
functioning and wellbeing in
women with CPP

Objectives

Primary:

- recruitment rates
- retention rates

Secondary:

- Effectiveness
- acceptability of proposed methods of recruitment & assessment tools

Study Design

3-armed RCT comparing:

1. Electro-acupuncture treatment
2. TCM HC
3. Standard Care (SC)

A mixed methods approach:

Quantitative (validated questionnaires)

Qualitative (focus groups discussion)

Components of EA treatment:

Traditional Chinese
Medicine health
consultation (TCM HC) +

Acupuncture needling +

Electro-stimulation



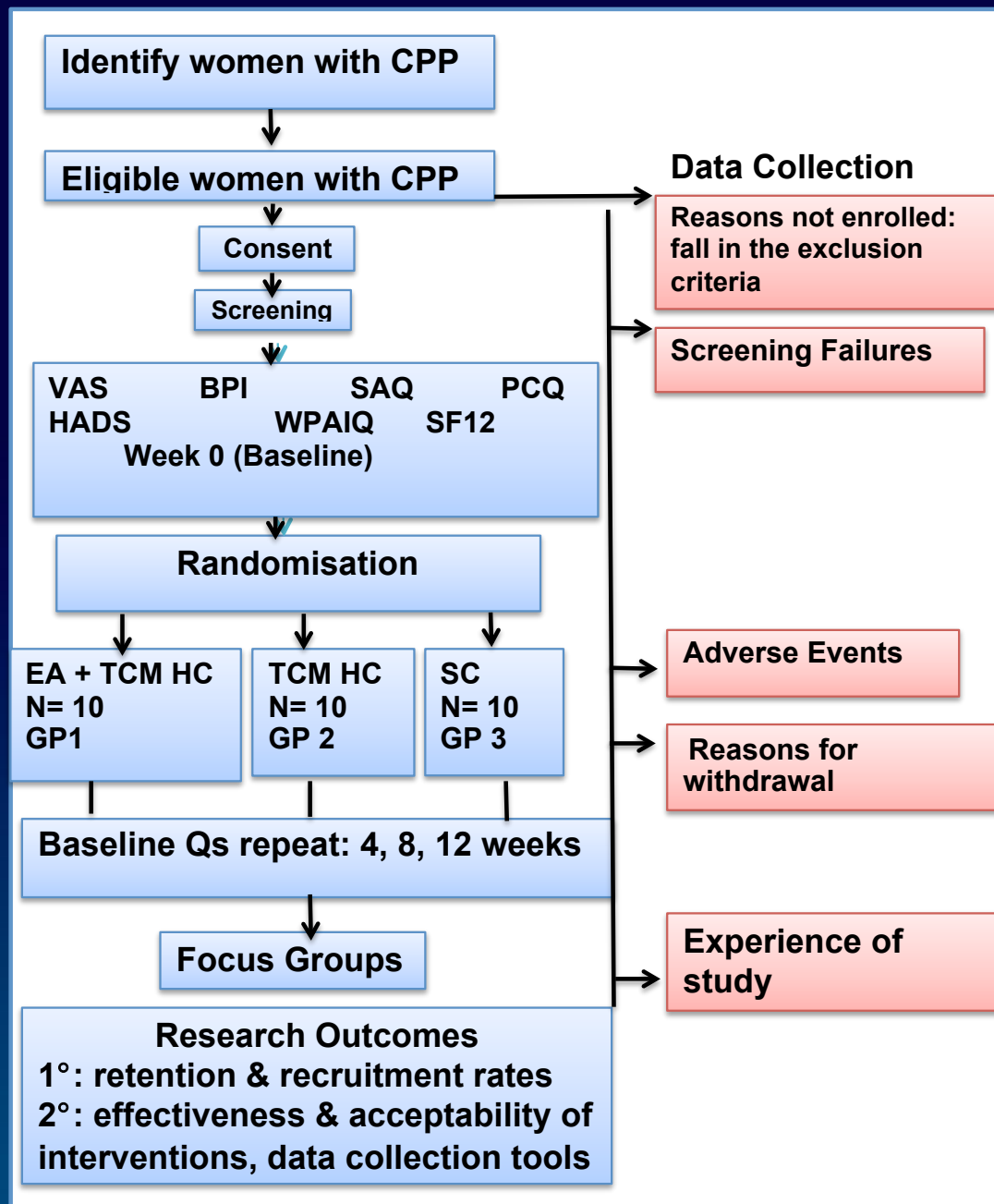
Inclusion Criteria

1. CPP longer than 6 months
2. Average pain score of at least 4/10 in the previous week
3. Able & willing to comply with intervention
4. Women aged 18 and above

Exclusion Criteria

1. Pregnancy
2. Malignancy
3. On anti-coagulant
4. A pace maker in-situ
5. Treatment with EA within the past 6 months

Participants' Flowchart



Recruitment Rate = 51%

No of Patients referred=59

Ineligible = 28

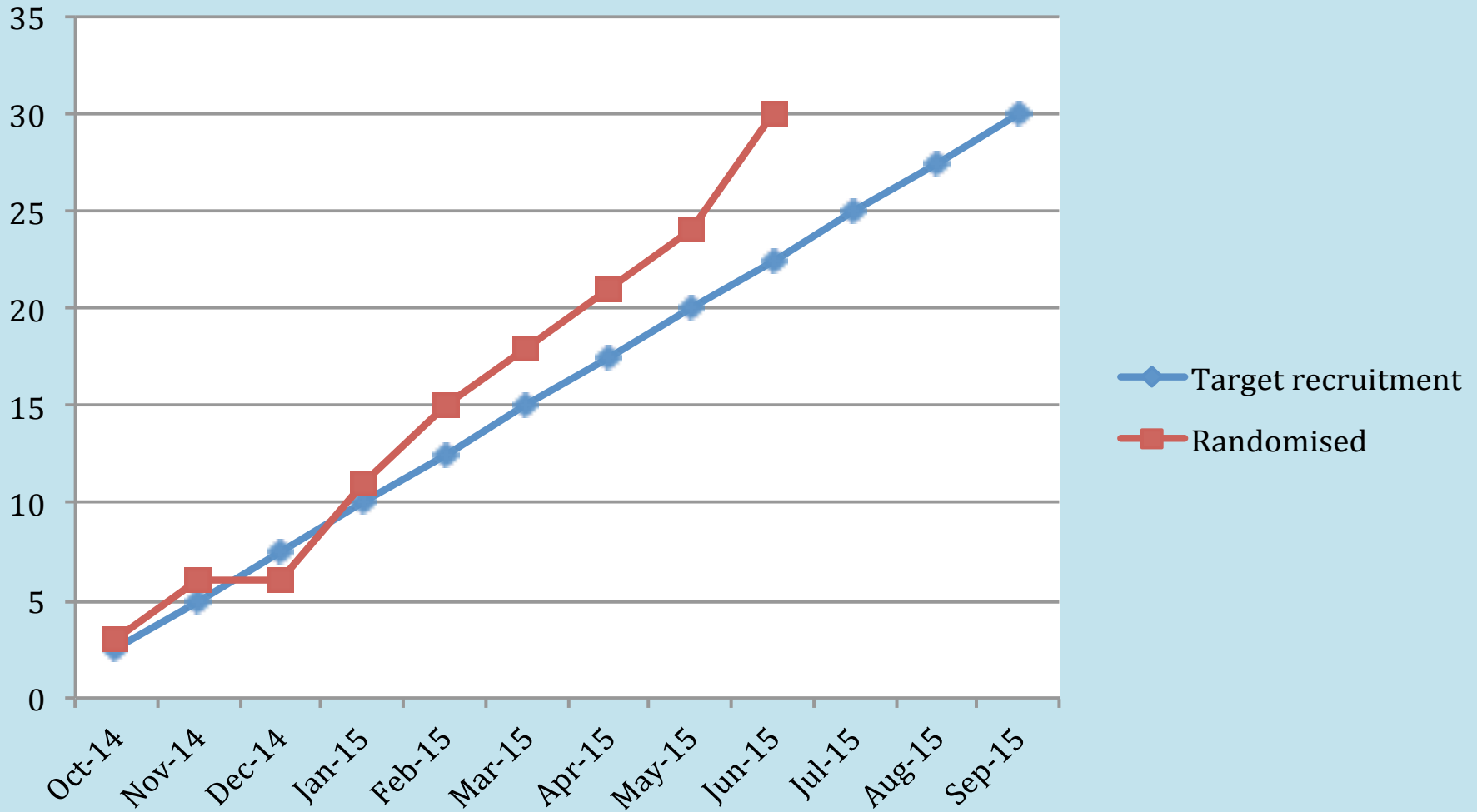
- 12 unable to commit time
- 4 not interested
- 7 medically ineligible
- 5 uncontactable

Consented= 31 (52%)

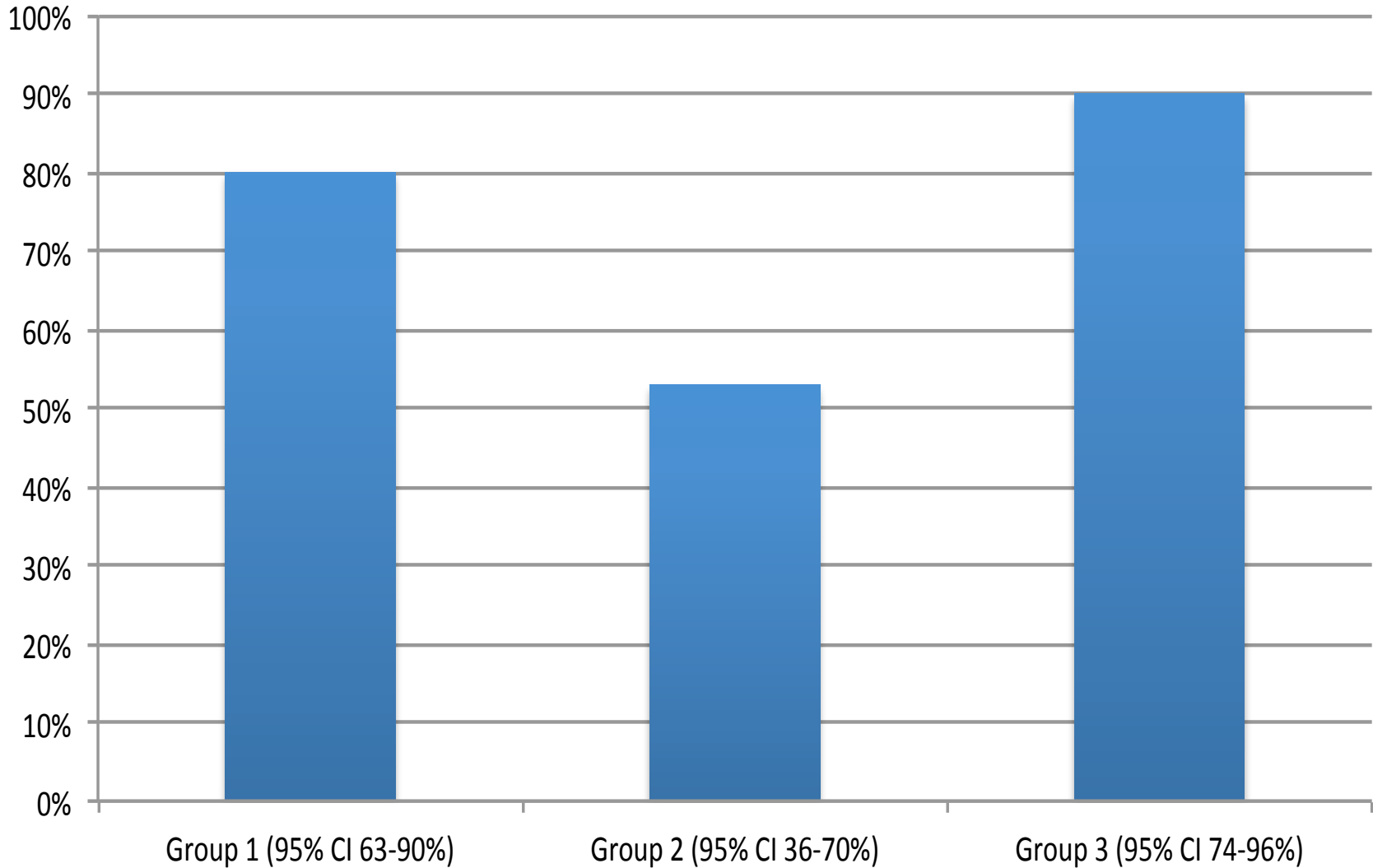
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Randomised= 30
(51% CI 38-63%)

Results: Recruitment Target Vs Randomised (3 months ahead of schedule)



Rentention Rate: Questionnaire Return (%)



Secondary Results & Findings

- A trend towards improvement ($P < 0.05$) in the intervention groups compared to SC in pain (Visual Analog Score) & sleep
- Thematic analysis of focus groups data: perceived improvement in pain, sleep & energy in the intervention groups

Quote From A Participant

“ I went through four years... pacing the floor at night time or having broken sleep...When I started on acupuncture, I could sleep through the night.”

Conclusions

- Supports the feasibility of a future large scale RCT
- Provides preliminary data that EA could be effective in CPP

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