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

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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?