Reviewer's report

Title: An intervention to reassure patients about test results in rapid access chest pain clinic: a pilot randomised controlled trial [ISRCTN60618114]

Version: 1 Date: 25 June 2014

Reviewer: John Chambers

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting study on an important topic. Preliminary work has shown that normal test results are more reassuring if the patient is prepared before the test occurs. Unfortunately in the setting of a rapid access chest pain clinic, this RCT showed that a discussion with pamphlet proved no more effective than the pamphlet alone.

1. It would be useful to explore the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the discussion. It seems likely that the staff at the clinic already talked sufficiently to the patients and the authors already refer to this in the discussion. What was the nature of the discussion by the nurse? Was there an interaction or was it delivered verbatim from a written sheet? Did the nurse explore questions and concerns? Was he or she trained in psychological techniques? The study by Sanders et al also showed that a nurse intervention was not effective although in a different situation, after coronary angiography. This was thought to be because the intervention occurred too early but also because the nurse was relatively untrained in psychological techniques.

2. What explanation and discussion occurred after the investigations? Were the patient given an explanation of the cause of their chest pain if investigation showed no evidence of coronary disease?

3. The introduction refers to a two stage study but the description in the methods and thereafter is of only one stage, the pilot RCT. It might be clearer if the development of the intervention was referred to in the main methodology. I would like to know the frequency of cardiac tests performed. These could be added to Table 1.

4. Would the authors clarify in the text (page 14 and 15) where proportions are lower or higher, that these differences were not statistically significant.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests