Reviewer's report

Title: Home-based versus hospital-based cardiac rehabilitation: Literature review, study design and rationale of the Birmingham Rehabilitation Uptake Maximisation Study (BRUM): a randomised controlled trial (ISRCTN72884263)

Version: 2 Date: 27 August 2003

Reviewer: Heather M Arthur

Reviewer's report:

My comments here are related to review of a revised manuscript.

First, I'd like thank the authors for their consideration of my earlier comments and their attention to addressing them. For the most part, I am satisfied with the authors' responses and the revised manuscript is much improved. There are one or two remaining issues that I would like to see addressed. They might be considered minor but I think they are important in the cardiac rehabilitation literature.

1. The word 'uptake' is being used differently in this manuscript compared to other CR papers. Often, uptake is used to mean that the patient accepted the referral to CR and joined the program. From then on, adherence is used. In the case of this study uptake appears to be almost synonymous with adherence. In addition, uptake seems to be related only to the exercise component of their comprehensive CR program. When the authors say they are measuring uptake at certain time points, I tend to see this more as adherence. I think this needs a little more clarification.

2. There is accumulating evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of home-based CR (another paper has been published in Circulation, May 2003, since my last review). The effectiveness among various sub-groups is a legitimate gap but with the stated lack of statistical power to address this issue I think this aim should be softened a bit more.

3. In the definitions of adherent and non-adherent (section on the qualitative element), there is a lack of standardization between groups. The definition of non-adherent for the home-based group appears to be 'all or nothing'. The definition of non-adherent for the hospital-based group is less clear. How will patients who complete a portion (say 70%) of the exercise sessions be defined...are they adherent or non-adherent?

I would appreciate the authors' consideration of these final comments.

Advice on publication: Accept after minor compulsory revisions

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests: