Reviewer's report

Title: Reporting of loss to follow-up information in randomised controlled trials with time-to-event outcomes: a literature survey

Version: 3 Date: 25 May 2011

Reviewer: Eleanor Pullenayegum

Reviewer's report:

The revised manuscript reads well and provides a clear description of the study process. Most of my previous concerns have been addressed. I do, however, have three main concerns remaining:

Major compulsory revisions:

The manuscript is phrased to suggest that articles should be "assessable" and "consistent" (see, for example, the conclusion in the abstract, "Authors should improve the presentation of both Kaplan-Meier plots and LTFU information..."). I would contest this. In order to be "assessable" and "consistent", the LTFU information has to be presented in twice - most commonly this would be the text and a figure. I don't agree that this is necessary, and I don't believe the article makes an adequate case for this. If the conclusion is to be left as-is, some justification for this is needed.

I hesitate over the definition of a study result being "not robust". This occurred if a chi-squared test done before the time of minimum follow-up led to differing statistical significance depending on the type of imputation for discrepant information. This does not, however, mean that the result reported in the original manuscript - which would usually be from a log-rank or proportional hazards regression - would change. I realise that it is not possible to assess the robustness of either the log-rank or the proportional hazards tests, however I do think that the classification of "not robust" is misleading, especially in the abstract.

Minor essential revisions

I still struggle with the definition of "not consistent". To start, on page 5 if LTFU information is in the plot but not in the text, the article would be classified as "not consistent", however from page 4 these would be classified as "not assessable"? Also, if the reported numbers at risk and the numbers calculated from the plot were only off by 1, can you be sure that this could not be due to rounding errors when reading off the plot? I still think it is mis-leading to define articles with LTFU information in the plot but not the text as "not consistent" - you are assuming that the information should be reported in two places, which I do not think should be the case.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests