Reviewer's report

Title: Opt-out as an acceptable method of obtaining consent in medical research.

Version: 1 Date: 17 December 2010

Reviewer: Jenny Hewison

Reviewer's report:

This is a worthwhile piece of work, which is clearly described. The chief criticism is that the authors fail to acknowledge likely limits to the generalisability of the findings. Two aspects in particular require comment:

1. All participants had to do was agree to a researcher looking into their files. Studies requiring direct contact between researcher and participant, or requiring any other involvement by participants might have produced different results.
2. The similarity between those opting out and those remaining might be conditional on the nature of the study and hence the variables compared (eg depression scores rather than microbiology) as well as on the factors referred to above.

Revisions to address both these points are "minor" but they are also "essential".

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.