Reviewer's report

Title: A Comparison of Small Monetary Incentives to Convert Survey Non-Respondents: A Randomized Control Trial.

Version: 1 Date: 4 March 2011

Reviewer: Jonathan VanGeest

Reviewer's report:

General Comments:
The article is well-written and addresses an important topic in survey research given declining response rates. The questions posed by the authors are suitable and the methods utilized in their analyses are appropriate and well defined. Their review of the literature is adequate. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the analyses are appropriate, with limitations clearly stated.

Major Compulsory Revisions: None Identified

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Introduction/First Paragraph: Would include explanation why higher response rates are important to accurate/unbiased survey results (e.g., respondents being systematically different from nonrespondents).

2. Methods: Provide additional information on the methods (recruitment/incentive) for parent study.

3. Discussion/First Paragraph: Would recommend that the authors cite literature on factors related to survey response. See, for example, work by Sudman, etc.

4. Discussion/Second Paragraph: The authors should address literature on the number of contacts/response rates. For example, see work by Parsons et al. It is not just time, but also number of contacts that may be important.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. Introduction: I would recommend that the authors note work on the ethics of providing incentives as a means of improving survey response. For example, see work by Singer and Couper (2008); Singer and Bossarte (2006) or Wertheimer et al. (2008).

2. Discussion/Last Paragraph: Would recommend that the authors consider rewording sentence beginning with “Our data suggest that, with the exception…” to make a more cautionary statement. Study actually suggests that multiple mailings and incentives may not entice participation of the populations in question.

3. Discussion/Last Paragraph: I would recommend a sentence or two at conclusion of this paragraph addressing the potential use of design-based
approaches (both independent from or in conjunction with monetary incentives) to improve participation of hard-to-reach groups.

4. Conclusion: Consider whether it is a “faster” response or a “higher initial” response.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.