Reviewer's report

Title: The effect of two lottery-style incentives on response rates to postal questionnaires in a prospective cohort study in preschool children at high risk of asthma: a randomized trial

Version: 1 Date: 11 September 2012

Reviewer: siddharth pratap

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. In the "Main Findings" section, the authors state the following:

1a. "Before testing the interaction between the two interventions in the factorial design, we hypothesized about its possible direction. We expected to find either no interaction or a positive one. However, surprisingly, we found evidence of a negative interaction on the main endpoint (OR 0.55, p=0.048). Since we could not think of an explanation for this negative interaction, we decided to ignore it and analysed the trials separately."

1b. The major finding of the paper is that there are no significant improvements in the response rate with lottery-style non-monitory incentives. The authors comment on the statistically significant negative interaction on the main endpoint by saying "Since we could not think of an explanation, we decided to ignore it and analysed the trials separately." This exclusion of the negative interaction (and subsequent separation of trail analysis) needs to be further justified and explained in more detail. It may be benefited by analysis by an independent statistician.

2. In the Strengths and Limitations Section, the authors state the following:

2a. "For example, it is imaginable that participating families with lower level of education or non-western ethnicity earn less and therefore be more susceptible to these interventions than highly educated or western participants."

2b. One of the stratifications among groups was among Ethnicity of Parents (western / non-western parents / NA). This statement could be misinterpreted as western parents, a high level of education and high income are significantly associated; conversely, the implication is that lower income, non-western parents, and lower level of education are associated. The authors should make a more detailed statement and provide referenced studies as to why non-western parents are grouped into the "earn less" than western parents beyond "it is imaginable".
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests