Reviewer's report

Title: A randomized controlled trial of the effectiveness of a pre-recruitment primer letter to increase participation in a study of colorectal screening and surveillance.

Version: 1 Date: 9 May 2013

Reviewer: Helen Burchett

Reviewer's report:

This was a very clear, well-written article.

Discretionary Revisions

- Consider distinguishing between types of research – e.g. people may be more willing to participate in a short mailed survey than a trial involving procedures. I would expect that various incentives may have different effects for these types of research participation.

- ‘Sample & procedure’ – in paragraph 2, you state that eligible participants must be within 3mths of diagnosis in line 1, but in line 5 you suggest randomisation took place approximately 2-6 months post diagnosis. This leaves me a little confused.

- ‘Sample & procedure’ – in paragraph 2, to state that ‘the VCR contacted remaining patients for permission’ – it would be useful to clarify if you mean by post, phone etc.

- It would be useful to signpost figure 1 in the text., in the same way as you have signposted table 1.

- figure 1 – I wonder if this was merged into the pdf incorrectly? I’m not clear what the reason that 1866 people were not included in the trial – it has a ‘*’ but no explanation. There is also no title (although it says at the bottom, ‘figure 1’, it doesn’t explain what it shows)

- Am I right in thinking that there were two stages where consent was sought – firstly, consent for VCR to release contact details to researchers, and secondly, consent to participate in the study? This wasn’t totally clear. However figure 1 suggests that all of those invited to participate (i.e. who gave consent for their details to be passed to researchers) consented – is that correct? (it seems unlikely).

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.