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: 17 December 2013

Reviewer: Lambert Felix

Reviewer’s report:

Discretionary Revisions
Sample and procedure
1. Is there a reason why participants within 3 months of diagnosis were considered eligible? If so, please add a line to justify the timing. Although pleased to see a sentence with regard to this on the last paragraph of the discussion section.

2. Please specify how allocation concealment was achieved?

3. Also, describe how allocation concealment was implemented (Refer to the CONSORT Statement)?

4. In the 2nd paragraph, it is written that “Approximately two weeks following the primer letter ..........to release their contact details to the researchers.” From this sentence, it is not clear if this procedure was followed for all the participants. It looks like only the participants in the control group were sought permission to release their contact details. Please clarify.

The primer letter
1. Please add a sample letter in the appendix

Statistical methods
1. Power calculation: Please clarify if participation rates meant “consent” or “completion of study baseline measure” or “completion of 12 month follow-up measure”?

2. Also, specify explicitly, here, the primary outcome and the secondary outcomes.

Results
1. Does the registry have information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants? If so, please describe it briefly here.

2. Were the participants similar in socio-demographics at the outset?

3. If the above information (point 1) is available, it would be good to perform sub-group analysis based on age, gender, time since diagnosis etc.? I appreciate
that there will not be enough sample size to perform this. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see if there are any differences within and across the groups, which could also explain the ineffectiveness of the intervention.

4. Table 1: Please clarify what “Refusal” and “No Response” mean. It is not clear to me whether they related to refuse to consent or refuse to complete the baseline measures?

5. Please, also, provide the numbers of those completing baseline measure and 12 month follow-up separately for both the groups, and include them in a table, along with chi-square test and p-value.

**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'