Reviewer's report

Title: An Exploration of Different Methods to Promote the Enrollment of Black Subjects to a Large Cohort Study

Version: 2 Date: 15 October 2013

Reviewer: Adwoa Hughes-Morley

Reviewer's report:

Firstly, thank you for asking me to review this manuscript.

This paper is important in a difficult and under-researched area. The paper adds to a wider body of work on the recruitment of Black participants in research studies, as well as building on the work already published by the research team on the recruitment of this study population. The authors communicate the relevance and of the topic, and clearly state their study aims.

A range of interventions, applied using different methodologies, are reported in this paper. Not only do the authors describe the methods used to try and improve recruitment, they attempt to quantify the effects of the interventions by introducing controlled observations, as well as randomisation.

The data is collected from an impressively large cohort involving Black participants. However the data for this study were collected between 2002-2006. Thus whilst the data appears to be very sound, it is by no means fresh as more than a decade has passed since the start of data collection. Nonetheless, this paper makes a useful contribution.

WEAKNESSES

Minor Essential Revision:
1. On reading the cover letter attached with the manuscript (as well as the authors' other publications involving the same cohort), it is clear that the research team enrolled approximately 48,000 Black participants initially: yet this is missing from the manuscript. This manuscript needs to include the number of participants originally enrolled.

Discretionary Revisions:
2a. The main weakness of this paper is the lack of cost-effectiveness data. Cost-effectiveness estimates have only been attempted for one of the recruitment strategies: “Incentives to enrol another member: $2 immediately or $10 later”. It would have been both useful and interesting to have calculated the costs attached to all the recruitment strategies adopted, particularly the most successful strategies. Data on this is lacking within the wider literature, so a cost-effectiveness estimate would have made a significant contribution to the field, as well as to the originality and robustness of this manuscript.
2b. In the absence of cost-effectiveness analyses, some statements in the discussion section are not supported by the data presented. For example: “…if these strategies had been inexpensive, they would still have been worthwhile. Unfortunately, in our view none of these appear to be cost-effective if they were to be applied to the whole cohort. The student and local recruiter strategies are relatively expensive as many recruiters need to be trained in order to cover hundreds of churches” (p15). All references to costs in the discussion section should be supported by clear data presented in the results section.

3. I am not entirely confident the title of the manuscript correctly reflects the content of the manuscript. The manuscript’s focus is almost exclusively on the return of study questionnaires, rather than the recruitment of Black participants. Recruitment of Black participants and the return of questionnaires are quite distinct entities, and therefore I believe the title of the manuscript should more meaningfully reflect this. Perhaps the title of the paper can be better represented as “An exploration of different methods to promote the return of questionnaires by Black subjects in a large cohort study”.

**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