Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 17 October 2013

Reviewer: Jo Rick

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The fundamental question of what improves recruitment of black participants to research is both interesting and a current research challenge. The authors rightly identify the lack of evidence to guide researchers in this area. However, there are a number of issues with the research as currently presented.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The first part of the methods section describes an increase in the financial incentives offered to study recruiters, but no data is presented in relation to this re-promotion campaign – I wonder if it would sit better in the study context section.

2. Two of the recruitment sub-studies reported here have previously been published separately in peer reviewed journals (as the authors identify) so it is unclear what the justification is for their inclusion here in the methods & results sections.

3. The methods section describes up to 10 recruitment interventions (or variations thereof). Table 1 is helpful in understanding the overall approach, but in a study of this nature which is large, complex and multi-faceted it is difficult to understand exactly when and how these initiatives were taking place (in particular it is unclear what Operation Mission Possible 30,000 was meant to do - who were the buddy systems & tag teams for?).

It is also unclear the extent to which there was overlap between the groups of churches participating in the different interventions. (and therefore exposure of some of the target population to multiple recruitment interventions). There are a number of points at which this lack of clarity is compounded;

The results state that:

‘...as it is clear that the challenge of promoting questionnaire returns becomes harder as time passes and that non-participating subjects have rejected previous approaches.’

Implies exposure to multiple recruitment attempts.

The discussion states that some churches were excluded as they employed more than one strategy within the same time period (although it is unclear what that time period was) implying that the paper is reporting on discrete interventions (ie not multiple exposure to interventions).
The discussion also states in relation to follow up phone calls:
‘Nevertheless, from that time point we subsequently used follow up calls in all black churches as results of this study were available earlier in the promotional period.’ Which appears to suggest that all subsequent recruitment interventions are ’follow up telephone call + intervention’.

Overall the paper would benefit from a more detailed description of what was done and greater clarity about the exposure of potential participants to different recruitment strategies.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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

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