Reviewer's report

Title: Feasibility, recruitment and factors associated with motivation and satisfaction in an interventional study with 210 healthy volunteers without financial compensation.

Version: 3  Date: 19 June 2014

Reviewer: Jane Kim

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper. A better understanding of the incentives and barriers is essential for many stakeholders involved in clinical research, investigators and IRB members alike. Scientific advancement after all, rests on the participation of such volunteers and the topic is high salience in the research community.

Strengths of the paper:
1. Methods are appropriate and well described.
2. Authors found some interesting results, for example – it is surprising that social networking and radio were not found to useful methods of recruitment.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. The title of the paper suggests that feasibility of recruitment without the reliance financial incentives will be addressed. Authors should clarify exactly how feasibility was assessed, beyond the simple stating the low participation rate.
2. The major study flaw seems to be that there may be a large sampling bias. As mentioned in the discussion – greater age was associated with easier contact by telephone. If this is indeed true then the sampling has missed a younger population who may be swayed less by financial incentives in making decisions to participate. I think this is a major drawback and at the very least the limitations need to be further bolstered to include this.
3. Were the outcomes dichotomized at the sample median. This seems problematic if outcomes were categorized according to empirical median – cut-offs will vary by type of question and there is no a prior logic that governs the cut off – furthermore the results will not be very interpretable.
4. Final recruitment was 10.1% – with such low recruitment rates, I doubt whether this sample is representative of the target population in this study. It is reasonable to then think that a highly interested group of volunteers were selected and are thus more likely to report high satisfaction and a different set of motivating factors.

Minor essential revisions:
p.5 L 108: What is meant by “not rescuer” – can the authors provide a more
One may wonder whether the choices available in the reasons listed may have biased the respondent to respond in a certain manner; for example, if “no time” was a reason, perhaps this would be more likely to be chosen.

Discretionary Revisions:

p. 4 L87: I would doublecheck the accuracy of the statement.

p. 4 L98: It would be helpful to have further clarification on the randomized trial – what is the control or were the 3 different strategies compared to each other.

p. 5 L115: Some restating would make this clearer.

p. 11 L 275: Omit the sentence “It would be interesting…” This seems like a casual thought or better placed at the end of the discussion.

p.12 L283: I would suggest reducing the examples in the literature. There should be greater emphasis on the actual data collected in the current study.

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, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.