Reviewer's report

Title: Standardisation of information submitted to an endpoint committee for cause of death assignment in a cancer screening trial - lessons learnt from CAP (Cluster randomised triAl of PSA testing for Prostate cancer)

Version: 1 Date: 11 November 2014

Reviewer: Lorcan McGarvey

Reviewer's report:

This is a niche but nonetheless important area of study and the manuscript is generally well written if quite technical and dense in places. The authors report the impact of revising clinical vignettes based on feedback of prototype (phase 1) summaries from endpoint adjudication committee. It was clear that initial vignettes while generally considered of high quality continued potentially. The modifications have resulted in reducing the chance of guessing correctly to 50:50. It appears the factor to most likely un-blind is the presence of study specific factors (e.g. reference in the vignette to inclusion/exclusion criteria). The approach taken is undoubtedly time consuming as a consequence costly. It does have learning points and methodological implications and applications for other disease areas. I only have some minor essential points for revision:

1. The loss of clinical information in an attempt to blind the reviewer is certain to have an effect on the accuracy of the determination of UCD. This is mentioned briefly in the discussion but some further comment is needed. Did reviewers feel that loss of this information influenced the confidence with which they could assign UCD. This would be important to establish.

2. Figure 2 and 3 are redundant as the information presented is sufficiently evident within the tables and text.

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