Reviewer's report

Title: Practical considerations for estimating clinical trial accrual periods: application to a multi-center effectiveness study

Version: 1 Date: 16 February 2005

Reviewer: Judith Lumley

Reviewer's report:

General

The paper takes up a prior theoretical paper by the first author and presents examples of the impact of likely variations in recruitment of participants on the actual recruitment rate in a multicentre clinical trial.

Although the problem of slower recruitment to a clinical trial than predicted and is widely recognised I had not seen this approach discussed before. I did find it compelling since experience on data monitoring committees is usually of much slower implementation than planned even when major efforts have been made to think through problems and barriers.

The methods described were difficult to access in full because the primary paper (in Controlled Clinical Trials) is not available through this university and is not held by any libraries nearby. The explanation in the submitter paper was clear.

The website reference given by the authors took me only to the first author's home-page with no obvious access to the spreadsheet template and SAS programme.

On the other hand I did find the discussion and conclusions clear and sensible. The graphic was most informative, as was Table 1.

The practical implications of this approach have the potential to be very useful in planning and in setting realistic time-frames and funding requirements.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Ensure that the URL for the data and program are accessible

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

None

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes

**Declaration of competing interests:**

Statistician reviewer needed: YES, though only because I could not access the website.

No to all the questions about competing interests