Author's response to reviews

Title: Increasing Recruitment to Randomised Trials: A Review of Randomised Controlled Trials

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Version: 2 Date: 2 June 2006

Author's response to reviews: see over
02nd June 2006

Melissa Norton
Medical Editor
BMC Medical Research Methodology

Dear Dr Norton

Please find enclosed for your consideration, the revised manuscript, figures and tables for the paper entitled “Increasing recruitment to randomised trials: A review of randomised controlled trials” which has been peer reviewed for the BioMed Central Medical Research Methodology journal.

Following the much appreciated comments from the three reviewers, outlined below is a point-by-point description of the changes made, taking each reviewer’s comments in turn.

**Reviewer: Peter Bower**

**Minor essential revisions**

1) It has now been explained why this paper was not included in the main review.

2) The discrepancy between the numbers in the Forest plot and the tables has been rectified and additional data has been added to Table 1 in order for the information given for all the trials to be consistent.

**Discretionary revisions**

3) The terminology has been explained.

4) We thank the reviewer for this suggestion and have decided to accept their alternative label.

5) We acknowledge that the placing of some of the strategies can be seen differently, but we have decided not to change the placing unless the reviewer feels strongly about it.

6) We thank the reviewer for this suggestion and have decided accept their alternative label.

7) Again, we acknowledge that the placing of some of the strategies can be seen differently, but we have decided not to change the placing unless the reviewer feels strongly about it.

8) We thank the author for highlighting that the suggested paper would add completeness and it is now referred to in the discussion.

**Reviewer: Denise Kendrick**

**Major compulsory revisions**

1) The body of the paper has now been set out using the QUORUM headings and subheadings.

2) More detail has been given in the introduction about the HTA review and what its findings were regarding recruitment strategies.
3) More details about the searches conducted has been given in the Searching section.
4) More details about the study selection has been given in the Selection section.
5) In the Data extraction section, the unclear phrase has been reworded.
6) Details of the validity assessment has now been given.
7) The spelling of “Forest” plot has been corrected and the use of Revman has been added to the text.
8) The groups of reasons for exclusion in Figure 1 which were the same have now been combined.
9) The ambiguous wording in the Trial Design paragraph of the Results section has been reworded.
10) The level of difference found in recruitment rates has been clarified where required.
11) Table 1 now shows in more detail what the combinations of strategies A, B and C involved.
12) The reference numbers of the papers have been added to both the Forest plots and Table 1.
13) The Forest plot has been edited as recommended by the reviewer.
14) Figure 2 has been re-done in order to show the effect sizes as RR as opposed to OR.
15) Table 1 has been edited in accordance with the suggestion by the reviewer.
16) The principal findings of the review have been given at the start of the discussion and the strengths/weaknesses of the review referred to.
17) The effective simple recruitment approaches have been added to the abstract.

Reviewer: James M Wright

Major compulsory revisions

In line with the reviewer’s comments we have given more explanation as to how this review updates the previous one and provided a summary in the discussion of the effective and non-effective interventions. Whilst we acknowledge that it would be beneficial to be able to summarise the evidence and discuss the magnitude of the improvement, we feel it is difficult to do so given the limited amount of evidence there is, and feel that definite recommendations as to which strategies to use can only be achieved through more RCTs being conducted of recruitment strategies. In light of this we feel that not enough trials have been conducted using any of the strategies and more are needed across the board.

Yours faithfully

Dr Judith Watson  Professor David Torgerson