Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 20 April 2006

Reviewer: James M Wright

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper updates a Cochrane review of RCT evidence relating to interventions to affect recruitment to trials. It uses a slightly different methodology in that it is limited to RCTs of real trials and excludes mock trials. The review includes about 6 RCTs that were not in the Cochrane review that was last updated in 2002. However, this paper does not make any conclusions or recommendations that differ from the Cochrane review.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
A systematic review is not just finding, cataloguing and pooling RCT evidence. The difficult part is interpreting the evidence and providing information for researchers conducting future trials who want to optimize recruitment and for researchers wanting to study interventions to improve recruitment. The paper needs more explanation as to how this review substantially updates the previous review. It requires a summary in the discussion of what interventions do not improve recruitment, what interventions may improve recruitment, and what interventions have been proven to improve recruitment. In each of these categories they need to summarize the evidence they used to come to that conclusion and in the event that the intervention is effective what is the magnitude of the improvement. When that is done they should be in a position to recommend what specific interventions need to be studied and in what kind of trials. I think at least 2 examples of different trials that could be added to a planned future trial would significantly enhance this paper. The open versus blind intervention seems to provide a practically important improvement. This needs to be explained and put into practical terms. How confident are you of the finding? Is it likely that negative trials of this intervention have not been published? What type of trials would this be possible and what type of trials would this be impractical.

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

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.