Reviewer's report

Title: Motives for (not) participating in a lifestyle intervention trial

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2008

Reviewer: Nicola Mills

Reviewer's report:

General comments:

This paper assessed differences between participants and non-participants to a cardiovascular disease lifestyle intervention trial, and explored the motives and barriers underlying their participation decision. Although such issues have been explored in other research areas, the authors state that evaluation is lacking in this particular field. The abstract summarises the study well, the study aims are clear, the methods are appropriate and well described, the results appear sound and the discussion and conclusion are adequately supported by the data. There is sufficient reference to how findings fit in with those from other studies.

Minor essential revisions:

Abstract:

1. In the methods section the authors state that motives and barriers to participation were investigated but they do not give any indication of how such data were collected. They could modify their final sentence to "Motives and barriers that underlie study enrollment were also investigated by questionnaire" or something similar.

2. A sentence is needed with regard to methods of statistical analysis in the methods section.

Background:

3. Page 3, second paragraph, lines 4 and 5: "demonstrated that non-participants are younger... in comparison with non-participants". Presumably one of the "non-participants" terms should be replaced with "participants".

Methods:

4. Participants subsection: The final sentence in this subsection on page 5 states that patient inclusion stopped when 50 questionnaires in each group were returned. It is not clear why the authors chose this cut off point and so I would like to see their reasoning.

5. Measurements subsection - The authors tell us on page 6 that non-participants were telephoned but they do not tell us how many were contacted. It states at the start of the results section that all 65 non-participants agreed to complete a
questionnaireâ##. Presumably they only contacted 65 of the 729 non-participants â## if so it would be useful to state this here in the methods section.

6. I would also like to see documented in the measurements subsection the criteria for selecting the non-participants to telephone as it would seem that not all of the 729 patients were contacted.

7. Behavioural variables subsection â## Could the authors please explain the term â##Packyearsâ## (p7) as it does not mean much to me and potentially other readers.

8. Motives and barriers for participation subsection â## It is not clear how the various determinants assessed by Likert scale were decided upon (p7). For example, were these issues that emerged from previous studies?

Results:

9. The authors tell us that all 50 invited participants took part in this survey. How were these 50 selected in the first place as I understand that there were 148 trial participants that presumably could have been invited to take part in this survey. I would like to see this information in the methods section.

Discussion:

10. If there is any possibility that the selection process to include participants and non-participants in this study could result in a group of patients that differ from the rest of the trial participants/non-participants then I would like to see this covered in the discussion of methodological issues.

Discretionary revisions:

Title:

1. Although the title does convey what the study is about â## trial participation motives - it fails to express that the study additionally explores differences between trial participants and non-participants. Perhaps it could be extended to clearly convey both study aims.

Methods:

2. At the top of page 7 it says that BMI was calculated on the basis of self reported data but in the discussion section the authors state that they compared self-reported BMI related data â## known to be unreliable â## with that measured by the physician â## presumably that recorded on the patient record database. I am therefore curious to know why the authors chose the self-reported method over the database method. It might be useful to state why they did this in the paper.

Figure 2:

3. It would be useful to the reader if the authors could indicate some numerical values to the terms â##Large roleâ##, â##fairly large roleâ## and â##small roleâ##.
What next?: Accept after minor essential 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, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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