Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying strategies to maximise recruitment and retention of practices and patients in a multicentre randomised controlled trial of an intervention to optimise secondary prevention for coronary heart disease in primary care.

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Reviewer: Graham C.M. Watt

Reviewer’s report:

This a well written, clear and largely descriptive account of how high rates of recruitment (for patients) and retention (for patients and practices) were achieved in a substantial, multi-centre trial of secondary prevention of CHD in Ireland.

The cross-border nature of the trial, involving general practices in two very different primary care systems, is a strength, which makes the findings of general interest.

The level of detail is unusual – covering aspects of research methods, which are usually taken for granted. It is valuable to see this detail in published form, even though, as “scientific evidence”, the findings are based largely on the authors’ experience and opinions.

The authors draw conclusions about “what worked for them”, which is useful, but the external reader, wishing to judge the relevance of the findings will probably have further questions. For example, did the enterprise have a novelty element, limiting the findings to more established research settings?

And crucially, it appears that the effort that went into establishing and maintaining recruitment and retention was substantial. Could this be quantified? The resources available to this research team might not be available to others. What would be essential and desirable in replicating the approach elsewhere?

There is also the rather fundamental issue of whether and to what extent this level of support for trial participants and practices, apparently more on the intervention side of the trial than on the control side, may introduce bias in relation to the study design and findings. That needs some discussion.

With this additional information and discussion, my view is that this paper would be a useful addition to the literature, as a resource for other research teams working in primary care.

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.