Reviewer’s report

Title: A Randomized, Controlled, Clinical Trial of Etoricoxib in the Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Reviewer: Mr Max Bulsara

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

Issues to consider:

1. Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown: if not, what are the shortcomings and could they be overcome?

What was the time difference between recruiting the first patient and the last patient in this study? Were the numbers of patients in each centre equal? Did the authors assess treatment effect for each centre? I do appreciate that results from individual centres maybe not of interest, however if particular results can be attributed to certain centres than a common factor can be identified. I also appreciate that the precision of centre-specific treatment estimates maybe very low, however it is necessary to investigate treatment by centre interaction. I would recommend the use of Bayesian or mixed model approach, as the use of fixed effect approach may produce unstable or inefficient estimates of the regression coefficients. This method utilizes all the data and can be used to investigate treatment effects. It may also produce better parameter estimates then the time-weighted average change method.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing? YES but the statistical test may not be appropriate to investigate centre effects and treatment by centre interaction.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition: if not, in what ways? YES, the tables are adequate but the graphs are poorly drawn. I was unable to see the
error bars

4. Is the writing acceptable? YES

**Competing interests:**

None declared.