Reviewer's report

Title: Conducting research in individual patients: lessons learnt from two series of N-of-1 trials

Version: Date: 9 April 2006

Reviewer: Chris Del Mar

Reviewer's report:

This is a study that produces little new data, but reports on the barriers to and difficulties in conducting n-of-1 trials from this group already published. The Discussion is interesting to people undertaking research in this method of investigation, although this is a very small group of us!

The main sections of concern are:
• Outcomes.
• Ways of analyzing the results
• Withdrawals and drop-outs

Although this is of interest, the lack of good solutions to the problems makes the paper of limited usefulness.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

It would be better if the paper were expanded to include the data of all the trials done by n-of-1, like a systematic review, perhaps in primary care, or perhaps in use as a diagnostic tool.

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

I would also have enjoyed some discussion about what use these methods might have in clinical practice. Might we one day look forward to all GPs using these techniques to enable better decisions about what drugs doctors should be using for individual patients?

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 except that I have been the co-recipient of grants for research on closely related topics.