Reviewer's report

Title: Feasibility of evidence-based diagnosis and management of heart failure in older people in care: randomised controlled trial

Version: 4 Date: 17 August 2012

Reviewer: Peter Crome

Reviewer's report:

The authors have responded to my comments as best they can given the limitations of the study. They also seem to have responded to the other reviewers' comments.

I am still a little unhappy about the following:

The authors wish to replicate the study using larger numbers. However, they have also shown that the primary care approach is in need of improvement. Would not alternative approach be to try and improve primary care. It could well be more cost-effective. One does not really want to end up with a large study which just shows that good care is better than bad care.

The authors start the discussion by stating that the experimental subjects had higher rates of optimal prescribing without deterioration in quality of life although the results were not significant due to the sample size. Of course they do not know whether the results would be the same if the sample size was larger.

It would be useful to know what outcomes the authors might use if they were able to undertake a Phase III study. Harder primary outcomes such death and hospitalisation would be needed together with cost-effective analyses.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

None