Reviewer's report

Title: The effects of Vitamin C supplementation on pre-eclampsia in Mulago Hospital, Kampala, Uganda: a Randomized Placebo controlled clinical trial

Version: 5 Date: 10 February 2014

Reviewer: Gerben ter Riet

Reviewer's report:

It has been pleasure to read this well designed trial on a simple intervention. It is important to report these findings and make them available for systematic review.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods:
Some ambiguity about similarity of color, shape, size AND TASTE. Taste can be difficult to achieve since ascorbic acid is an acid and cellulose a complex sugar. Please specify how similarity of taste was enhanced/guaranteed, if at all.

Results:
Consider adding a table listing drop-outs for each group and (reported (alleged)) reasons for drop-out

Discussion
I think that type I error is mixed up with type II error. In this case, a study with a mainly negative result, it is type II error one may worry about, although a qualitative analysis/discussion of which effects are not being excluded (near the 95% confidence limits) and which may be of public health interest (given the low cost of vitamin C) may be informative.

The explanation in the letter (“The high still birth rate in the intervention and control groups could be because delay of the women to reach the hospital after labour has started and institutional delay especially for women who needed caesarean section as the waiting time on average was 4-6 hours.”) is much more straightforward than in the text of the paper. I advise to use the text from the letter in the paper or consider a formal statistic (if it can still be produced) of median waiting time and interquartile range.

Tables
Writing 04 instead of 4 (to indicate percentages below 10) is a bit unusual, although it helps to get the outline right.

Legends should explain all abbreviations in the table: BP, CI etc

Binary variables: space may be saved if one category is omitted (e.g. report %YES, omit %NO). Use legend to explain this.
Table 1
No comments

Table 2
Add a 4th line with the total incidence.
Not informative to have all row percentages at 100%
Misspelled = Pimegravidae

Table 3
Miscalculations(typos?): 409+17=418?? Please check the (statistical) calculations.
5+4102=415??
02+414=418?? shed some doubt on attention to details of the authors.
For eclampsia, the risk ratio is zero. CI cannot be calculated unless with a command like STATA's firthlogit after representing the 2x2 table as a data file with zeroes and ones (expand command)
Misspelled= pre-eclampsia

Table 4
low birth weight, still birth delivery and preterm delivery: please list all outcomes in this table.

Minor Essential Revisions
Stat methods
intention-to-treat principal = principle

Discretionary Revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no conflicts of interest