Reviewer's report


Version: 1 Date: 8 April 2011

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

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Comments to Authors:
1. P(age) 1, locations 1 to 9, suggest inserting [ON] after [Toronto].
2. P 1, Contact, l(ine) 7. Suggest inserting [Canada] after the mail code.
3. P 3, Trial registration. Include the date the trial was registered, and the date the first patient was randomized.
4. P 4, p(aragraph) 1, l 10,11. Suggest rewording as [... has changed be over 10 times during a ...]. Fold is not a well defined concept. The word increased is not necessary since numbers bigger than 1 imply an increase and numbers less than 1 imply a decrease. In truth the change over the baseline is 10.8 while the ratio of the end relative to the beginning is 11.8.
5. P 4, p 2, l 6. Is [significantly] a statistical judgment? If not, replace [significantly] by some other word such as [dramatically].
8. P 5, p 2, l 4. Replace [failed to] by [did not]. It is a failure if they work and were not detected, yet if they are NOT cost-effective, it is not a failure.
9. P 7, p 3, l 1 and 6. Both of these [significant] seem to be clinical judgments and so should be replaced by something like [clinically important].
10. P 9, p 3, l 1,2. Rewrite as [... at 6 weeks, and 3, 6, 9, and 12 months ...] just like P 27, Table 3 and Figure 1 and Table 2 in the published protocol for the trial.
11. P 10, p 2, l 11 to 14. How well are these measured? Since this could be an important part of the economic analysis, some checking should be sought to ensure their veracity.
12. P 12, p 1, l 2,3. Add [d] to [use] to read [used] and delete the phrase [traffic to be accessed first when paying for] as it is used twice.
13. P 12, p 3, l 4. What is the measure of agreement to be used as it is missing from the analysis section, and what is your criterion for acceptable agreement?
14. P 13, p 3, l 2. Which ones, there are hundreds?
15. P 14, p 1, l 8. Which confidence levels will be used?
16. P 14, p 2, l 11. Where is a reference to these techniques, and a justification for using 10,000 replicates?

17. P 17, p 1, l 2. Replace [ranging] by [varying].

18. P 17, p 2, l 1. By deleting those with missing baseline values but have been randomized, you are no longer doing an intent to treat analysis and you run the risk of a biased assessment. Please provide a justification of this task, as your sample size justification in Reference 17 anticipates you will have a 30% loss.

19. P 17, p 2, l 3. Last observation carried forward is rated as the worst technique for imputation in many texts on imputation. Why did you choose that method?

20. P 17, p 2, l 8. Provide references for the imputation analysis.

21. P 18, p 2, l 7. If they are published, provide some references.

22. General comment. Reference 17, the trial protocol, had an incorrect computation for the adjustment for missingness. The sample size added 30% when it should have divided by the compliment of 30%, ie 0.7, to get 489 or 163 per arm, rather than the 444 or 148 per arm. If the trial is not yet completed, then the revised sample size should be considered particularly if the high rate of drop out is close to 30%.

A random sample of 10 R(eference)s was checked for accuracy and some others were checked out of interest. The BMC journals try to publish all authors so they all can be listed, rather than leaving the last author [Zeiss E] out of R 2, l 1 in place of [et al]. Other Rs have many more authors! Also, this reviewer likes to see the issue number as it makes it easier to find the R when one want to get it from online databases.

23. P 21, R 1, l 2. Insert [(6)] after [342].

24. P 21, R 2, l 2. Insert [(8 Suppl)] after [20].

25. P 21, R 3, l 1. Delete [In].

26. P 21, R 3, l 2 uses the short form for the J while R 6 and 42 use the long form. Choose one for all Rs and use it throughout.

27. P 21, R 6, l 2. Insert [(11)] after [53].

28. P 21, R 9, l 2. Insert [(3)] after [7].

29. P 21, R 11, l 1. The date format is not clear whether it was intended to be February 11 or November 2. Indeed the date is November 2 and the page number is A1. The date format chosen should be specified. If you want to use something close to the Canadian standard for dates, try using [2009-Nov-02, A1] as an indicator for its location.

30. P 21, R 12, l 2. The fifth author has initials [JW], and l 2 insert [(19)] after [57].

31. P 21, R 13, l 1. The fifth author has initials [JW], and on l 2, rewrite [whiplahs] as [whiplash] and insert [(5)] after [57].

32. P 21, R 14, l 1. While the last author is John Frank, the database has him with his first initial and not both initials! On l 2, insert [(1)] after [32].

33. P 21,22, R 17, l 1,2. The fifth author has initials [HM], the ninth author has
initials [JA] and the last author has initials [JW]. On l 3, rewrite as [Whiplash-associated Disorders:] and l 4 delete [BMC].
34. P 22, R 20, l 2. Where is this located? [Toronto ON]? If so, insert it on l 2.
35. P 22, R 24, l 2. Insert [(3)] after [29].
37. P 22, R 32. Delete the periods and so rewrite as [NC].
38. P 22, R 33. The journal and citation are missing and should be [J Roy Statist Soc (B);34(2):187-202.].
39. P 23, R 37, l 1. Rewrite as [Kleinbaum DG:].
40. P 23, R 39 is missing the authors which are [Gold MR, Siegel JE, Russel LB, Weinstein MC(Eds)].
41. P 23, R 40 can delete the periods after authors initials to read [Lin DY, Feuer EJ, Etzioni R, Wax Y:] and delete the [In] in front of the journal name.
43. P 23, R 46, l 2. Insert [(6)] after [255].
44. P 23, R 52, l 3. Correct the citation to [2006, 6:68.].
45. P 24, R 59 has 2 more authors [Cheruvu L, Corcari R:]. On l 3, insert [(6)] after [26].