Reviewer's report

Title: Design of the Randomized, Controlled Sequential Staged Treatment of Emphysema with Upper Lobe Predominance (STEP-UP) Study

Version: 2 Date: 8 October 2014

Reviewer: Gaetan Deslee

Reviewer's report:

The authors describe the design and rationale of a randomized controlled open-label study assessing the efficacy and safety of bilateral vapour ablation in emphysema.

This is a very interesting study. There is urgent need for randomized studies in the growing field of endobronchial lung volume reduction treatments in emphysema.

The paper is well written and the methods are clearly described.

Minor essential revisions.

1) Could the authors precise if the FEV1, TLC, RV, DLCO values used for the inclusion/exclusion criteria are pre- or post-bronchodilation

2) How are mPAP and s PAO measured? Is it by echo or right cathererism?

3) Could the authors explain why 30 meters in the 6MWT was chosen to define the responder rate. A MID of 26 m was suggested by Puhan et al. based on an analysis of the NETT cohort (Puhan MA, Chandra D, Mosenifar Z, et al. The minimal important difference of exercise tests in severe COPD. Eur Respir J 2011;37:784–90).

4) Could the authors precise if the patients treated by vapour ablation will be systematically treated by antibiotics and/or corticosteroids?

5) Could the authors explain how the missing data will be handled in the final statistical analysis?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.