Reviewer’s report

Title: Clinic Variation in Recruitment Metrics, Patient Characteristics and Treatment Use in a Trial of the Osteoarthritis Management

Version: 1 Date: 5 August 2014

Reviewer: George Peat

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Major compulsory revisions

1. Clarity of participant flow and methods. Cluster RCTs are always challenging to report clearly and the use of both cluster and patient-level interventions adds to this. I appreciate that the previous report is referenced for the reader but I would suggest that it is necessary to have a participant flow chart as per CONSORT to understand the sequence of recruitment of clinics and participants and the relative contribution of exclusions and non-consent etc.

2. Ultimately, readers will want to know that the issues encountered transcend the particular circumstances of the PRIMO trial and have wider implications. This was not entirely obvious and this should be more critically considered in the Discussion.

3. The effect of expanded codelists in 3 practices and other modifications to recruitment strategy in some practices will surely contribute to between-clinic differences in patient characteristics/treatment use etc. This warrants more critical discussion.

Minor essential revisions


5. Background. Lifetime risk estimates in intro are high. See more recent US estimates from Losina et al. which emphasise the fact that the Johnston County estimates may be particularly high due to racial distribution of population and rural setting.

6. Information from the final column on Tables 1 and 2 has been cut off. Please format so all information can be viewed. Include all abbreviations used in the table in the footnote (e.g. FM, IM, DO etc)

7. Reference 33. Typo

Discretionary revisions

8. Are Figures the best way of displaying the information? Tables could provide estimates of precision (e.g. 95%CI) and raw numbers that form the basis of the calculated proportions.

9. The authors could possibly link their findings on (in)accuracy of OA coding in...
the medical record to previous validation studies (e.g. Lix, 2006; Harrold; Kopec etc)

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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