Reviewer's report

Title: Does Alendronate Reduce the Risk of Fracture in Men? A Meta-analysis Incorporating Prior Knowledge of Anti-Fracture Efficacy in Women

Version: 1 Date: 19 November 2004

Reviewer: Ann Cranney

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Would help to have input from a statistician with expertise in Bayesian methodology

The question posed in this paper is well-defined.

This paper is unique in this content area since the authors have used Bayesian random effects models to incorporate information of anti-fracture efficacy from RCTs in postmenopausal women to men with osteoporosis. Sawka et al. then compare the results using Bayesian methods to a classical random effects pooling of data from two RCTs of alendronate in men. The Bayesian methodology seems to be well-described but may not be familiar to all readers and more detail could be included.

Background â€“ It would be beneficial to reference data that highlights the issue that vertebral fractures in men may be more common that previously recognized (e.g. CaMoS data).

Re: systematic review of alendronate trials in men it would help to include further details on the development of their search strategy or consider including actual search in an appendix? Only two trials were found that evaluated alendronate treatment of male osteoporosis. Was unpublished data included?

Reporting of results - A flow chart outlining the search results would help.e.g. total number of potentially eligible trials/studies. Results of search strategy and extraction are presented in data sources and may be more appropriately placed in the results section.

Did the authors contact study investigators to clarify method of randomization? Were vertebral fractures assessed in the same fashion in both trials of alendronate in men?

The control arm of the Ringe trial received 1ug of alfalcacidol which could be considered as an active comparator versus standard vitamin D supplement of 450 IU in the Orwoll trial. The authors did mention the inconsistency of vitamin D formulations as a limitation in discussion.

The writing is clear although I noted a couple of spelling errors: Last line of 1st paragraph â€“ page 6 contacted by electronic male (mail), also in same paragraph should be world-wide.

The discussion section is balanced and is appears to be supported by the data in the paper.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Declaration of competing interests:
Consultant to Merck, Zelos Therapeutics, and Procter and Gamble.