Reviewer’s report

Title: An RCT of a smoking cessation intervention delivered by dental hygienists: a feasibility study

Version: 1 Date: 24 December 2006

Reviewer: Peter Heasman

Reviewer’s report:

General
This paper is from an established group of researchers in the UK who are experienced in the field of smoking cessation. It is a crucial aspect of healthcare that does not always achieve the recognition that it deserves within the professional dental community; similarly, the potential role of dental professionals in providing smoking cessation advice is not largely appreciated by colleagues in medicine.

This paper describes an RCT which is well-designed and executed. It has been described as a feasibility study which is reasonable and my opinion is that the paper deserves to be published. Unfortunately, the number of participants is relatively small. A sample size calculation was undertaken on the 6 month data with the suggestion that it should be used for informing a larger, multi centre study. This is a reasonable approach.

With such small numbers of participants, it was always likely that the number achieving continuous quit status at all follow-up appointments was going to be small but the authors present additional important findings such as the numbers who reported a sustained quit attempt in both groups.

Many participants are lost to follow up and, for example, 6 month data are collected from only 71 of the original 116 participants. This is typical of subjects in a smoking trial where those who have failed to quit prefer or opt not to be confronted by their healthcare professionals.

Minor essential revisions:

RCT is a widely accepted abbreviation but nevertheless, I would use the term in full when it first appears in the text;

In Figure 1, the authors give the % validated quitters as absolute numbers with the actual %s only appearing in parentheses.

Discretionary revisions:

There is a case for combining tables 2 and 3.

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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)
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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
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What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance 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 examined the PhD thesis of the lead author in 2005. Other than that, 'I declare that I have no competing interests'.