Reviewer’s report

Title: The effects of varying protein and energy intakes on the growth and body composition of very low birth weight infants

Version: 1 Date: 2 November 2011

Reviewer: Ken K Ong

Reviewer’s report:

This paper reports a RCT of higher preterm nutrition in preterm VLBW infants. The higher protein and calorie formula groups had greater weight gain and gains in fat-free mass over the 28-day treatment period. The study appears to be well performed and clearly reported.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. How many were approached to join the study. A simple flow-chart would be useful to display this and the small number of drop outs.

2. Treatment duration was intended to be 28 days but seems to be quite variable. How was the end of the intervention otherwise defined for each individual? (e.g. discharge from the Unit?).

3. The analysis used (adjustment for initial measure and duration) provides the most valid statistical comparison, but it makes interpretation of effects sizes difficult. It would be helpful to also include a figure showing the changes in weight, length, Z-scores FFM etc. between the 4 groups. This would also illustrate the trends in length Z-score changes that appear quite similar in size to the changes in weight.

4. Methods: The study design is simply a RCT

- Discretionary Revisions

5. Can BMI Z-scores also be calculated?

6. Table 4, final column: need not include P-values for the initial and duration terms, but simply indicate that these were adjusted for in the model.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'.