Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of vilanterol, a novel long-acting beta2 agonist, with placebo and a salmeterol reference arm in asthma uncontrolled by inhaled corticosteroids

Version: 1
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Reviewer number: 1

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An interesting negative study of adding vilanterol to ICS showing no additional lung function benefit that ICS therapy plus placebo.

In general I think this is written very well although some issues seem to be missing:

1. There seems to be large intercountry variation in the results that is not explored in detail which might explain a loss of power.
2. The results seem incomplete for some secondary endpoints such as am PEF and should be included
3. It is stated this is the first trial by the sponsor to show a negative response to salmeterol vs placebo. Does this include all unpublished study results and how was this verified?
4. A discussion on how to improve future studies which might increase background ICS compliance and diminish study effects is merited such as longer run-ins, provision of ICS for a background period especially in countries with more limited drug access

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.