Reviewer's report

Title: Oral rehydration versus intravenous therapy for treating dehydration due to gastroenteritis in children: a meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials

Version: 3 Date: 4 February 2004

Reviewer: Ronald L Koretz

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General
The investigators have responded to my queries satisfactorily, although, in their last comment to me, they seem to be suggesting that they are relying solely on statistics to determine heterogeneity. I would suggest that the first determinant of heterogeneity is a clinical assessment. In fact, they did so when they chose not to include cholera studies because the disease was different. In this same light, it would still seem to me that including a trial that only enrolled those who failed oral rehydration results in the inclusion of patients who are not really comparable to those in the other trials. Even if the statistical tests do not indicate heterogeneity, it is there.

I do have one question related to their response to Dr. Fontaine. They appear to have elected not to include further data supplied by Dr. Fontaine because they did not seek that information from other investigators. Yet, in paragraph 4 of the Methods section, they note that they did request other data from primary investigators as necessary. While the actual types of data may be different, I am not sure that their original intent would have been violated by using the additional Fontaine data.

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

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
See General comments.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None