Reviewer’s report

Title: Difficulties in recruitment for a randomized controlled trial involving hysterosalpingography.

Version: 1 Date: 13 April 2006

Reviewer: Bei-Hung Chang

Reviewer’s report:

General
This paper reported the reason for non-participation in a clinical trial that involved a HSG in routine fertility work-up among subfertile women. This is a brief paper which did not give any background information to support the significance for conducting such a study other than the recruitment for this trial was more difficult than expected. The major reason, exclusion criteria, which accounted for three quarters of the non-participation, might be avoided if in the study planning stage the number of potential eligible participants was estimated based on the data in the participating hospitals. For example, one exclusion criterion was older than 37 years old at the first visit, this information presumably was easily obtained from the medical record of past patients in the hospital. The only reasons for non-participation that were unique to this trial were reluctance to laparoscopy, dye and HSG which however only accounted for a small percentage of the non-participation (38 out of 632). All the other reasons, such as no show, inattentive clinicians, and don’t want to be involved in a research project have been reported in other studies. Strategies to avoid the first two reasons could have been implemented during the study. This study therefore does not seem to provide new and useful information in the recruitment literature.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
More details should be provided in the method section. For example, it should be made clear that only a subsample of the trial was included for the current study (i.e. only the patients recruited in one of the three hospitals during the first half of the recruitment period were included). The recruitment methods need to be described in more details, e.g. how were the potential eligible participants identified, who approached the patients, who recorded the reason for non-participation etc.. Table 3 can be combined with Table 1 due to the overlap of information presented. The classification of unavoidable and avoidable reasons is not compelling. As explained earlier, good planning before the start of the trial can avoid over estimating the potential eligible participants. Exclusion criteria is therefore not entirely an unavoidable reason for nonparticipation. Provide more background information to justify the importance of the study.

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

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.