Reviewer’s report

Title: Protocol for the Proactive or Reactive Telephone Smoking CeSsation Support(PORTSSS) Trial

Version: 3 Date: 8 April 2009

Reviewer: Leif Erhardt

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I have definitely not misunderstood the aim of the NRT arm of the trial and think the investigators have ducked my critique. They state that “This is a pragmatic trial design, investigating the “added value” of the trialled strategy”. I can see their point but chances are high that the NRT arm will be difficult to interpret for the reasons I already raised. Poor control of adherence, interference with other types of NRT bought OTC or prescribed by GP’s and compliance issues as well as the unblinded design makes any scientific interpretation difficult.

I think this is a matter of opinion but I do not like poor science and the NRT arm is an example of that. The trial would have been so much better and valid if the investigators only focused on the comparison of the phone counseling programs. I guess it has to do with financing and that part of the trial is covered by the pharma company making the NRT patches.

My question about what constitutes a “motivated smoker” was not addressed at all in the comments from authors.