Reviewer's report

Title: Trial protocol: Rapid reduction versus abrupt quitting for smokers who want to stop soon: a randomised controlled non-inferiority trial

Version: 1 Date: 10 August 2009

Reviewer: lawrence friedman

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I have reviewed this manuscript. Overall, it is well written and has all of the relevant elements. I have a few comments and suggestions.

First, there are a great many acronyms and initials used in the paper. In one paragraph alone, I think I counted seven unique ones. Certainly, some of these initials are in common use, but many are not (perhaps particularly for those not in the United Kingdom or in the particular research field). Additionally, in a few cases, either the acronym or initial is not spelled out fully before first use, or it is done at a subsequent use. I would strongly suggest limiting the usage of initials. Most are not used so frequently that they could not be spelled out on each occasion. And, as noted, care should be taken to make sure that all are spelled out on the first usage.

Second, on page 24, the sample size assumes that data will be obtained from essentially all randomized participants. Is that truly likely? How will missing data be handled? Is the primary analysis intention-to-treat?

Third, on page 11, the top line of the last paragraph implies that participants who discontinue treatment will be excluded from the trial. I do not think that is the intent, so I would suggest saying that “We will exclude from treatment all those who have had severe adverse reactions ….”

Fourth, a few trivial comments: In a few places, there are singular/plural discrepancies (e.g., page 7, line 14 where “data” is used as singular; page 13, third paragraph, top line, “Participant” should probably be plural; page 15, bottom lines “participant” and “their”; page 16, line16, “participant” and “they”). Also, under Competing Interests, “PNA” is “PA under Authors’ Contributions and on the title page.”