Reviewer's report

Title: Who is the research subject in cluster randomized trials?

Version: 1 Date: 10 January 2011

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

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In general this second paper is well done. Here are series of suggestions designed to improve the manuscript.


2. P 2, paragraph 2, l 10. Suggest rewriting as […] unless at least one of these conditions is met. I do not think you mean exactly one.

3. P 3, p 3, l 2. Replace [significant] by [important]. Leave significant for its statistical context.


5. P 3, p 3, l 4. Suggest replacing [will fail to] by [may not].

6. P 4, p 4, l 3. Rewrite as […] towards smokers.]. Leave out the space.

7. P 4, p 4, l 3. Delete the second [either].

8. P 6, p 4, l 2. Delete [in order] in front of [to] as the words are redundant in English. Also P 12, p 1, l 6; and P 18, p 2, l 2; and P 19, p 3, l 1.

9. P 8, p 1, l 1. Replace [Medial] by [Medical].

10. P 8, p 1, l 3. Replace [fail to] by [do not].

11. P 9, p 3. Suggest replacing the bullets by the numbers from 1 to 6 as this is the way they are referenced in the subsequent paragraph as well as on P 13.

12. P 10, p 2 ff. Would it be useful to reinforce that your recommendations are for human subjects and not for other types? You could comment about other types of subjects, but possibly in the discussion.

13. P 12, p 2, l 2. Replace [e] by [be].


15. P 18, p 2. Suggest where you might like to have Box 1 located.

16. P 26, p 1, l 5. Suggest dropping [only] as it implies an unstated expectation.

17. P 27, p 4, l 2. Delete space after [messaging] before the [,].

18. P 27 ff. Why not put a Y for Yes or N for No for each of the 4 criteria next to
each possible subject type in each example?

19. P 32 ff. The number of authors listed is not consistent. Sometimes there as many as 9 authors for reference 36 and sometimes it is 3 et al for reference 5 when indeed there are 9. Trials could publish them all.

A random sample of 10 references was checked for accuracy of citation. This reviewer also likes to see the issue number as without it sometimes makes the obtaining of a reference to be checked or read more difficult; so this reviewer like to see them included.

20. P 32, R(eference) 5, l 1. Include the rest of the authors. In l 3, include [(8)] after [11].


24. P 35, R 23. There is a more recent version published in 2005. Is there merit to having the latest one?


27. P 35, R 28 needs to include more in the citation.

28. P 36, R 32. This R could not be verified.

29. P 36, R 35. Include the rest of the authors.

30. P 36, R 36, l 3. Insert [(1)] after [6].

31. P 37, R 40, l 3. Insert [(1)] after [42].

32. P 37, R 41. Include the date of publication.