Reviewer's report

Title: Recruiting South Asians to a lifestyle intervention trial: experiences and lessons from PODOSA (Prevention of Diabetes & Obesity in South Asians)

Version: 1 Date: 21 July 2011

Reviewer: Vera Nierkens

Reviewer's report:

General comments
Thank you for the opportunity to review your manuscript. The article addresses important issues for doing research and implement interventions among ethnic minority groups.

Below you find my comments.

Major Compulsory revisions
1. It is very interesting to read the experiences. However, I miss a clear research question. Is it only about the participation rates or also about difference between referral rate and participation rate or the efficiency of the recruitment methods used?

Methods
2. For me, it is insufficiently clear whether you want to describe the recruitment strategy as a whole or after the extra funding only. Could you clarify that, please?
3. The methods section included in the text too little details about concrete targets of recruitment methods and about the expected numbers of the “source population” per recruitment strategy. What was the aim of the different strategies? It become clear from the table now, that the marketing strategies are conducted for awareness, but not from the description in the text.
4. I do not understand the difference between method 1b and 1d. What is the extra contribution of method 1d?
5. The description of method 2b is unclear for me: the first paragraph seems to be another method than the second paragraph.

Results
6. In general I think the results section needs to be more structured to understand what you expected per recruitment method and what the result was.
7. The text would become clearer when in this section the numbers of Table 2 were used as well.
8. Could you please clarify the percentages? Especially in the text I, it was difficult to understand whether the percentages were the percentage of all people screened or the percentage of the source populations for example.
9. Regarding community recruiters: could you please describe how many community recruiters were asked to refer people? Without this information, it is difficult to interpret the comment about the five recruiters without referrals. Were these the 10 mentioned at 2b?

Discussion

10. For me, it seems that the first paragraph of the discussion describes new data about the numbers referred per method which is not described in the results section. Could you please add this to the results section?

11. The comparison with other trials is interesting, but will be more informative if you would describe some background characteristics of participants in other trials.

12. The last sentence of the aforementioned paragraph seems to address another issue than the low response rates, i.e. the efficiency of recruiting via record systems because of extra restrictions in target population. This should be a separate paragraph.

Discretionary revision

13. Regarding the media promotion, it would be interesting whether you know more about the perceptions of participants about this. Did / do they speak about this media promotion and did it raise awareness. If you have these data, I would prefer if you describe it in this paper.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.