Reviewer’s report

Title: Reporting of participant flow diagrams in published reports of randomized trials

Version: 1 Date: 8 October 2011

Reviewer: Amy Plint

Reviewer’s report:

In this well written and methodologically sound study, the authors assessed the completeness and type of information reported in flow diagrams of 263 randomized controlled trials published indexed in the PubMed Core Clinical Journals. They observed that the reporting of reasons for exclusion prior to and post randomization, reporting of number of participants who received allocated intervention, were lost to follow-up or discontinued the intervention and those included in the main analysis is less than ideal. In the discussion the authors include interesting and practical suggestions of how to help authors and journal editors in completing or reviewing the CONSORT flow diagram.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
None

Minor Essential Revisions:
None

Minor Discretionary Revisions:
1. The authors report accessing the journal’s instruction to authors regarding the CONSORT statement in November 2010 yet the trials included in their study were published in 2009. Do they have any evidence whether journal endorsement of the CONSORT statement may have changed between time of publication of the relevant RCT and the time in which journal’s instructions to authors were reviewed? Given that many of the trials were published in journals that have endorsed the CONSORT statement for many years, this is unlikely to be major methodological limitation but a line addressing this point might be worthwhile.

2. The authors mention that the endorsement of the CONSORT statement by journal editors and the wording of the endorsement varies between journals. It would be interesting to know, although not essential, if there were any difference in the completeness of reporting of the flow diagram based on the “level of endorsement”.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
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