Reviewer's report

Title: A pilot randomised controlled trial of negative pressure wound therapy to treat grade III/IV pressure ulcers [ISRCTN69032034].

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2012

Reviewer: Roxanne Ward

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Major Compulsory Revisions
1. I found that there was a discrepancy between the primary objective of this project (assess feasibility) and the primary outcome (time to healing of the reference pressure ulcer). I would expect that the primary outcome would be more in line with feasibility assessment, such as rate of recruitment, consent rates, etc. Time to healing could be considered a secondary outcome in this pilot.

2. The authors provide recommendations to improve recruitment, data collection, outcome measure selection and trial design for a larger RCT in the Conclusions. However, the authors do not address the issue of how to improve protocol adherence and potential cross-overs, which are significant barriers to feasibility. All 6 of the participants in the treatment group withdrew and received non trial treatment. The authors do not state whether or not this trial would be feasible in their discussion or conclusion. Given the results of this pilot, I would suggest that this may not be feasible unless there are significant changes to the inclusion criteria and/or design. While it may be disappointing to say that a trial is not feasible in the current form, it is still important information. Resources are scarce for research and it is vital that funds are used as efficiently as possible; it may not be the best use of funds to make this an international multi-centre study in order to reach target recruitment.

Discretionary Revisions.
1. Under Discussion, in the second paragraph "Recruitment", the second sentence is too long. I would suggest a new sentence at the beginning of "However, this is...".

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.