Author's response to reviews

Title: Developing a survey of barriers and facilitators to recruitment in randomised controlled trials

Authors: 

Geetinder Kaur (gkaur@liv.ac.uk)
Rosalind L Smyth (rlsmyth@liv.ac.uk)
Paula Williamson (prw@liv.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 18 September 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
To
The Editors,
Trials

Re: MS: 2119607382701110 - Developing a survey of barriers and facilitators to recruitment in randomised controlled trials

Many thanks for your letter with regards to this paper which invites us to respond to reviewers’ comments and revise accordingly. We have revised the manuscript and our responses to the referees’ comments are explained in the enclosed sheets. We are grateful to all the reviewers for their helpful comments and feel that these amendments have considerably enhanced the revised manuscript.

Please find the revised manuscript attached.

We hope that we have dealt with all of the points raised and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Geetinder Kaur
Clinical Research Fellow
Department of Women’s and Children’s Health and Department of Biostatistics
Institute of Translational Medicine
University of Liverpool
Responses to Reviewers’ comments

Reviewer 1

Major compulsory revisions

1. We acknowledge the reviewer’s point about the small sample for piloting the questionnaire and demonstrating the usefulness of the survey tool by including the response rates for its use in the MAGNETIC trial. This has been added to the text as suggested (Results, Page 12) and Table 2. A brief description about the MAGNETIC trial with number of recruiting sites and response rates has been included. The results of the survey of facilitators and barriers to recruitment to the MAGNETIC trial will be published separately.

2. We have added text about shifting dynamics at sites and its resultant impact on recruitment as suggested by the reviewer (Discussion, Page 13).

Discretionary revisions

1. We acknowledge the reviewer’s comment about questionnaire wording in Q4; as different trials may have distinct recruitment and follow-up periods, we have included text to highlight the need for trial specific modifications to the questionnaire prior to use (Results, Page 15).

2. In Q8 we chose to use ‘clinical team’ as opposed to ‘clinical research team’ though we recognise that there will usually be an overlap. We have added text to highlight the need for pretesting the questionnaire with trial teams prior to use to ensure consistency in the use and understanding of terminology (Discussion Page 15, Conclusion, Page 15)
Reviewer 2

Major compulsory revisions

General

1. We acknowledge the reviewer’s comment about describing the reviews that have been used to develop the questionnaire and have shortened the text describing these reviews (Methods, Pages 6-8). We have also included Table 1 showing how the facilitators or barriers listed in these reviews were selected, classified and worded as factors for use in the questionnaire (Table1).

2. We agree with the reviewer’s comment about modest numbers for piloting the questionnaire and have included text on its use in the MAGNETIC trial (Methods, Page10-11) and response rates (Results, page 12). Text has also been added to describe the changes made after the pilot in more detail (Methods, Page 10).

3. We have added further text in the Conclusion about the need for evaluation of the usefulness of the survey tool (Conclusion, Page 16).

Writing the questionnaire

4. The reference to previous reviews has been deleted from the Background. The reviews that were used to develop the questionnaire were identified by literature search on Medline using search terms as described in text; a comprehensive search was not carried out. (Methods, Page 6).

The questionnaire

5. Text has been included to clarify the uses of the survey tool at different stages of trial recruitment (Discussion, Page 14).

6. We appreciate the reviewer’s point about clinician’s understanding of the various factors listed in the questionnaire. We have added text encouraging trialists using the survey tool to pilot the survey within clinical teams to ensure consistent understanding of terminology and make trial specific adaptations prior to use (Discussion, page 15).

Minor essential revisions

1. We are grateful to the reviewer for his point about clarifying ‘participants’ in text and it has been changed to ‘study teams’ (Methods, Page 5).
2. Better accuracy of e-surveys due to ‘less transcription errors’ has been included in text (Discussion, Page 13)

3. We have included text to re-emphasize that the survey tool should be modified and adapted to a particular trial before use (Discussion, page 15). The authors encourage trialists to think about other trial specific recruitment issues and adapt the questionnaire accordingly, to collate information from teams at various sites.
Reviewer 3

Major

1. We acknowledge the reviewer’s comment about the need to present evidence of usefulness of the tool; however this is beyond the scope of the current paper which focuses on the questionnaire development process and feasibility of use. The survey tool has been used to elicit facilitators and barriers to recruitment to the MAGNETIC trial and the results of the survey will be published separately. We have however included the response rates for its use in the MAGNETIC trial (Results, Page 12).