Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 4 May 2012

Reviewer: Alison McDonald

Reviewer’s report:

The authors write on a topic that is hugely important and of great relevance to trialists. They provide an overview of the facilitators and barriers that have been identified from previous studies and reviews. However I have a few concerns with the content:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors describe the small sample sent the pilot questionnaire and the response (3/5). The main survey was emailed to clinical teams in head and neck cancer trials and the MAGNETIC trial. The article would benefit from including the number of site staff who were included in the main survey and the number who actually completed it, and the percentage of completion. Has this been published separately? has there been an analysis undertaken of the open questions? This would help the reader to judge whether the survey may be a useful tool or whether the potential burden of length and complexity significantly limited the response.

2. The authors correctly conclude that trial conduct is shaped by various internal and external forces. The authors should consider including some discussion around the shifting dynamics at sites and the resultant impact on recruitment (eg staff moving on/changing roles; changing policies (eg at NHS and local Trust level) and the role of the networks).

Discretionary Revisions

1. I found some of the questionnaire wording in the survey ambiguous and confusing - eg Q4 asks the responder whether he/she has been involved for the whole period. It is not clear if this means the recruitment period only, recruitment and clinical follow-up etc.

2. Also within the survey, is Q8 asking about the local clinical team or does this include clinical team members who are eg grant holders?

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