Reviewer's report

Title: Surgical trials and trial registers: A cross-sectional study of randomized controlled trials published in journals requiring trial registration in their author instructions

Version: 1 Date: 26 July 2013

Reviewer: Ludovic Reveiz

Reviewer's report:

This is a relevant topic and the article add to the existing literature by following both trial registration and results availability.

Major Compulsory Revisions

- The authors should report and analyse data on prospective and retrospective registration. Many trials available in the ICTRP were retrospectively registered. This has an important implication for evaluating the implementation of the initiative.

- Results reporting findings should be analysed according to the context of the Section 801 of the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act (FDAAA 801) requirement: for “applicable clinical trials” (compliance to “applicable clinical trials”). A key finding is non compliance of result reporting. This should be highlighted in the results section and analyse in more detail. The current version of the manuscript focus on descriptive data (i.e. list of registries of the ICTRP; this information could be described in a Table 4 as footnote) and the reader may loose the focus on key issues

- The limitations of the study should be described in more detail.

- Key references are lacking in the discussion section; some of which are:


Minor essential revisions

- The authors should justify in some way why they selected 10 highest ranked journals and the implications for external validity

- Including other relevant references on trial registration and result reporting
compliance in the discussion section to compare their findings.

- The authors could explore the process by which these 10 journals ensure trial registration (i.e. field in the system of submission, only in authors instructions etc) and discuss strategies of journal editors for ensuring good publication practice,

- Table 1: I suggest to include the journal’s country. This issue as well as the specific topic of the journal (i.e. transplantation) is also a limitation for generalizability.

Discretionary Revisions

- The inclusion of other relevant information such as the type of intervention (i.e. drugs, procedures..), analysing difference in date of registration (i.e. recent trials were are more frequently prospectively registered?)

- Explore difference between prospectively registered versus retrospectively registered and not registered trials according to results availability.

**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'