Reviewer's report

Title: A randomised controlled trial of six weeks of home enteral nutrition versus standard care after oesophagectomy or total gastrectomy for cancer: protocol for a pilot and feasibility study

Version: 1 Date: 15 March 2014

Reviewer: Magnus Nilsson

Reviewer's report:

This is a protocol for a pilot and feasibility study for a randomised controlled trial comparing a post-discharge home enteral nutrition program with standard care in patients operated for oesophago-gastric cancer. The study has been running since 2012. The main objective of the study is to determine whether or not an appropriately powered definitive trial will be possible.

Minor essential revisions:

1. The background and aims for the possible future definitive trial are reasonably well described; however, the hypothesis for this trial is not clearly stated. Please state a clear hypothesis for the future randomised controlled trial.

2. A concern that I have regarding the treatment arms is that in my experience standard care requires selective home enteral nutrition from the day of discharge in approximately 15-20% of patients. In this protocol all patients in the control group will have to stop enteral nutrition at discharge, adding a risk of exaggerating the differences between the intervention group and the standard care group compared to the situation in clinical practice. This may limit the generalisability of the results of a future trial.

General comment:

The main research question is important. The protocol is well written, details of the study are well described and it is clear how the authors plan to conduct their study. Details are well provided and future replication and comparison of the study will be easy. Planned statistical analyses are well described and reasonable. In summary this is a very well elaborated and written protocol, where my only concern, as mentioned above, is regarding the requirement that patients in the control group have to terminate enteral nutrition at discharge instead of allowing selective continued enteral nutrition.

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.