Author's response to reviews

Title: Systematic Techniques for Assisting Recruitment to Trials (START): study protocol for nested, randomised controlled trials

Authors:

Jo Rick (jo.rick@manchester.ac.uk)
Jonathan Graffy (jpg43@medschl.cam.ac.uk)
Peter Knapp (peter.knapp@york.ac.uk)
Nicola Small (nicola.small@manchester.ac.uk)
David Collier (d.j.collier@qmul.ac.uk)
Sandra Eldridge (s.eldridge@qmul.ac.uk)
Anne Kennedy (A.Kennedy@soton.ac.uk)
Chris Salisbury (c.salisbury@bristol.ac.uk)
Shaun Treweek (shaun.treweek@mac.com)
David Torgerson (david.torgerson@york.ac.uk)
Paul Wallace (paul.wallace@nihr.ac.uk)
Vichithranie Madurasinghe (v.madurasinghe@qmul.ac.uk)
Adwoa Hughes-Morley (adwoa.hughes-morley@manchester.ac.uk)
Peter Bower (peter.bower@manchester.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
23rd September 2014

Dear Editors,

Re: MS: 3205414651345165 - Systematic Techniques for Assisting Recruitment to Trials (START): study protocol for nested randomised controlled trials

Authors: Jo Rick Jonathan Graffy Peter Knapp Nicola Small David Collier Sandra Eldridge Anne Kennedy Chris Salisbury Shaun Treweek David Torgerson Paul Wallace Vichithranie Madurasinghe Adwoa Hughes-Morley and Peter Bower

We thank the Editors and reviewer for taking the time to read and comment on our revised manuscript for publication in Trials. We are thankful for all comments to improve the quality of our manuscript.

We have subsequently made changes to our manuscript to address these comments. Please find attached a revised manuscript and abstract for your careful consideration.

As requested we enclose overleaf, a point-by-point response to your raised concerns and provide reference to page numbers when addressing changes to the manuscript.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Pete Bower
Editor requests

1. Please ensure the title conforms to journal style for study protocol articles. The title should follow the format __________: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial?

We already have agreement in place with your Editorial Assistant, Jessie McGavin, to keep the title format as it stands, this is because we believe our reflects what the programme of work is truly about: ‘Systematic Techniques for Assisting Recruitment to Trials (START): study protocol for nested, randomised controlled trials’.

Please see below the email correspondence which took place between Jo and Jessie in July this year:

From: Jo Rick [mailto:jo.rick@manchester.ac.uk]
Sent: 22 July 2014 12:16
To: Trials Editorial
Subject: RE: RE: RE: Thank you for submitting your study protocol to Trials (MS: 3205414651345165)

Please ensure the title conforms to journal style for study protocol articles. The title should follow the format “___________: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial.” This title format doesn’t really reflect what START is, could we use the format “___________: study protocol for nested, randomized controlled trials.”?

From: Trials Editorial [mailto:editorial@trialsjournal.com]
Sent: 23 July 2014 10:08
To: Jo Rick
Subject: RE: RE: RE: Thank you for submitting your study protocol to Trials (MS: 3205414651345165)

The title format you suggest is fine.

2. Please state that all authors read and approved the manuscript in the Authors’ Contributions section.

We have inserted a line of text on page 23 to reflect this.

Reviewer’s report

1. Ensure all abbreviation are spelled out before first use in the body of the manuscript (START, NRES, VM, REC, PCRN)

Thank you for pointing this out. We have made the following additions to the text in the abstract and main text:

- Systematic Techniques for Assisting Recruitment to Trials (START is now written in full in the abstract);
- National Research Ethics Service (NRES is written in full on page 19);
- Vichithranie Madurasinghe (VM we have inserted text to reflect our statistician’s initial’s, page 18);
• Research Ethics Committee (REC is written in full on page 19);
• Primary Care Research Network (PCRN is written in full on page 13).
• Primary Care Research in Manchester Engagement Resource (PRIMER is written in full on page 13).

2. It would be helpful to describe a bit more about why the 2 specific interventions for Work Package 2 were selected. There is brief mention of this. However, it would be interesting to understand why the chosen interventions both focused on methods of providing information to participants, vs. how participants are initially identified, who approaches them, or other aspects of recruitment.

We have added additional detail on page 10 about our choice of interventions, highlighting that it reflected both scientific issues, and pragmatic and logistical concerns in this early phase feasibility study. We also added a statement to the discussion on page 22 to highlight that our early feasibility studies may not have fully explored the barriers to implementation of more complex interventions.