Reviewer's report

Title: A Concept for Trial Institutions focussing on Randomised Controlled Trials in Surgery

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Reviewer: Andrew Vickers

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper showing the importance of research infrastructure for promoting surgical research. Attention to the following minor points would help improve the paper.

1. The authors repeatedly say that randomized trials are the gold standard for generating "valid scientific evidence" or "reliable scientific evidence". This is simply untrue: randomized trials are the best method for generating evidence about one particular scientific question, whether a treatment does more good than harm. They aren't good for determining, for example, predictors of outcome after surgery.

2. The whole paper is about randomized trials, so why do the authors include some observational studies?

3. On page 5, I do agree that randomized trial in surgery do have special challenges, but I don't think you can just say "randomization" itself under methodology. There is nothing special methodologically about randomizing surgery; the point, which is given shortly after, is likely lower acceptability of surgery patients to randomization.

4. I would recommend that the authors write up a list of "learning points" and summarize these in a table. What lessons do they have for anyone trying to repeat their experience?

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.