Reviewer's report

Title: Decreased morbidity following long saphenous vein harvesting using a minimally invasive technique: A RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL COMPARING TWO TECHNIQUES FOR LONG SAPHENOUS VEIN HARVEST

Version: 1 Date: 5 May 2006

Reviewer: Richard Cook

Reviewer's report:

General
Well performed study, and generally speaking, well written manuscript. It would have been stronger if there was a more clearly pre-defined primary endpoint for the study, with some indication in the methods as to whether power calculations were done. As it is written, it is not clear whether the operative time and endothelial function were simply evaluated post-hoc or if they were clearly pre-defined objectives of this particular study. Nonetheless, after addressing the 'major compulsory revisions', I feel that this manuscript will be acceptable for publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. I would like to see some further commentary made on who was performing the vein harvesting through the minimally-invasive approach, and what training he/she received prior to doing so. Also, I would like to know how much experience these operators had with the minimally-invasive technique prior to the study being done, and what the learning curve was - specifically, how many unacceptable veins harvested during learning curve, how long until current harvesting times were achieved.
2. I would like to know a little bit more about selection of candidates for minimally-invasive harvesting - ie. whether certain types of patients should be avoided.
3. It was unclear to me exactly what 'minimization' refers to. Perhaps that could be expanded on further.
4. There is only 1 stated objective, but 3 conclusions. To be a purist, the actual pre-study objective should be more clearly stated (ie. what endpoints specifically), and then the conclusion should refer to that objective (or objectives, if more than one). The additional observations of shorter operative time and no difference in endothelial function can be included as simply additional observations, but not really conclusions based on the study protocol (unless they were actually pre-defined end-points of the study).

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Figure 1 has a circle with the number 40 next to it - I am unclear what this refers to.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.