Reviewer's report

**Title:** Individual Patient Data Meta-Analysis of Beta-Blockers in Heart Failure: Rationale and Design

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 5 October 2012

**Reviewer:** Lesley Stewart

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a well planned methodologically sound research plan for an IPD meta-analysis. The manuscript is clear and well written.

Minor comments on manuscript:

The submission has been made as a protocol, but the title of the submission describes an article on rationale and design rather than a protocol.

If I understand correctly, in addition to assessing the effectiveness of beta-blockers in heart failure, the authors also intent to use the data to develop a prognostic model to facilitate risk prediction. If so the second aim could usefully be added to the abstract.

The project is limited to 11 major trials that include the majority of relevant information. It would be helpful to state the proportion of known randomised evidence that this includes (i.e. numbers of patients included/numbers of patients entered in all known randomised trials which would other than size be eligible for inclusion).

Please disclose what support from the four pharmaceutical companies comprised, noting any financial conflict of interest and stating their role and influence in data analysis, presentation and publication.

The intention to explore economic impact is not well developed.

Minor comments on data collection forms:

The authors might have wanted to distinguish between what is unknown (i.e. missing at patient level) and what is unavailable (at trial level) and for some (conditional variables) what is not applicable. This can be helpful for analysis and interpretation of results.

The method of collecting data on hospital admission is quite complex and it might have been easier to collect as: type of admission: cv not hf; cv with hf; not cv; unknown; unavailable; not relevant (no admission) together with data of admission for each.

However, as most data have already been collected, I realise that even if the forms cannot be amended.