Reviewer's report

Title: Protocol for a Systematic Review and Individual Patient Meta-Analysis of Benefit of So-Called Lung-Protective Ventilation-Settings in Patients Under General Anesthesia for Surgery

Version: 1 Date: 1 November 2013

Reviewer: Nicola Petrucci

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The so-called “Lung protective Ventilation” includes low tidal volume AND low Plateau Pressure (< 30 mmHg). This is not stated in the definition and in the inclusion criteria.

2. The AA. should state why an IPD review is appropriate, and which is the expected benefit of an IPD review, compared to a standard one, for the specific research question. Please, consider that if the original data are flawed, even an IPD review will be flawed.

3. The AA will include observational studies, too. How do they assess quality of those studies? Patients in the observational studies are not randomized. Could it bias the IPD review? What if the non-randomized patients group are higher proportion than the randomized one? The AA should address that point preliminarily.

4. Literature search is limited. IPD review often enables inclusion of studies that could not be included in a standard SR. Thus, unpublished studies should be searched, too (grey literature).

5. The validity of the IPD approach requires that data from all the studies (or nearly all) will be available. The AA. should state in which case the analysis will not be performed due to lack of sufficient data from the original trials (Bias due to selective availability of study data).

6. The AA. should detail which factors are likely to introduce bias in the review.

7. Consideration of Outcomes: exploration of interactions between interventions and patient-level characteristics appear to be important. Are the AA going to consider that in outcome of interest?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.