Reviewer's report

Title: Ringer's lactate but not hydroxyethyl starch prolongs the food intolerance time after major abdominal surgery

Version: 5 Date: 11 March 2015

Reviewer: Michael James

Reviewer's report:

The authors of this paper is partially responded to my previous comments. They have clarified that only 88 patients were actually randomised and remove the references to the 111 patients. The data presented are of interest and the apparent cut-off of >2 L Ringer's lactate for the development of delayed gut recovery is relevant to the whole perioperative crystalloid-colloid debate. Unfortunately, there remain several problems.

Major revisions:

1. The statistical section remains problematic. It now appears that no a priori power calculation was performed and it is therefore unclear as to how the number of 88 patients was decided. Although a post-doc power calculation has been performed which demonstrates an adequate power of the study, the methods for arriving at 88 patients have not been clarified and this raises the issue as to how ethical permission was achieved for this study. In attempting to answer the questions regarding categorical data, the authors have chosen to use ROC analysis. This is an unusual approach of this type of data and will require the advice of a professional statistician before it can be accepted.

2. The data from the Vigileo system that was used have still not been presented. Under the "Fluid Therapy" section, the authors comment that, after the protocol-required fluid administration, further fluid therapy was given at the discretion of the attending anaesthetist. Did they use the Vigileo data to assist in the fluid choice and if not, what was the purpose of using this monitor? The authors have still not justified omission of these data from the paper.

3. In the discussion, the authors comment that HES maintained urine volume, and suggest that this was due to an improvement of renal perfusion but do not relate this to cardiac output, which presumably was measured using the Vigileo system. This remains unsatisfactory.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests