Reviewer's report

Title: Improving participation rates by providing choice on participation mode: Two randomized controlled trials.

Version: 2 Date: 4 December 2014

Reviewer: Linda Ng Fat

Reviewer's report:

Thankyou for the opportunity to review this paper on improving participation rates through providing a choice on participation mode. The paper reads well there are some revisions and points of clarification that can potentially strengthen the paper.

Major compulsory revisions

1. I think what is missing is references to the literature on telephone versus questionnaire mode. For example in line 258, you suggest that it might be ‘participation mode’ that has influenced the higher participation rates in trial 1, than trial 2 with choice option, what does the literature say about telephone versus questionnaire? Does it support your suggestion? (e.g. Siemiatycki, ‘A comparison of mail, telephone, and home interview strategies for household health surveys’)

2. Following on from this it might be useful to expand on lines 264-265, where you mention that some patients might be lost when participating by questionnaires. While it was not the aim of your study to compare these two modes of data collection, I think it requires a substantive interpretation. Why might postal questionnaires be less successful? Did the questionnaires have to be posted back by the participants themselves meaning additional effort on their part? Particularly as more individuals selected questionnaires when given a choice (Table 5), yet a smaller proportion actually participated.

3. In the Methods ‘design’ section can you please provide further information on the telephone interview for example how many attempts were made to reach the participant? At what time of day where participants called? Likewise with the questionnaire, did this have to be posted back by participants? Did the participants have to pay for the questionnaire to be posted back?

4. In table 2 you provide characteristics such as mean age of trial 1 or 2. Can these characteristics also be provided for the ‘no choice’ versus ‘choice’ groups? As it could be possible that different characteristics in each of the sub groups may have skewed the results?

5. Can you please expand on how general practices were chosen? And also provide brief geographical information as to where these practices were based? From my reading it is not clear in what location the study has taken place.

6. Lines 135-136 you mention what patients were excluded. I think this is a
limitation to the generalizability of your findings which you may want to include to
the final sentence in the discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions
There are a few spelling mistakes
1. Lines 53 to 54, ‘..and found that response rates declined’ … for what?
   Although it is clear that you mean …i.e. ‘when using web based modes’, given
   the rest of the paragraph, but it currently reads like half a sentence.
2. Line 65 ‘percentage’ should be ‘percentages’
3. ‘Send’ should be ‘sent’ e.g. lines 105, 270, 390
4. Line 111, ‘by’ should be ‘in’
5. Line 273 ‘questionnaired’ is not an English word

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.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests