Reviewer's report

Title: Optimizing early child development for young children with non-anemic iron deficiency in the primary care practice setting (OptEC): Study protocol and an internal pilot study for a pragmatic randomized controlled trial.

Version: 1
Date: 2 February 2015
Reviewer: Peter Alan Coventry

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript includes a comprehensive level of detail in-keeping with the SPIRIT checklist.

My comments for attention are for minor modifications only:

1) Perhaps the authors could include the SPIRIT checklist as an appendix

2) The background section is possibly rather too long and includes an overview of IDA which appears to be less relevant than the detail about NAID - the background could more effectively focus on the research context around childhood NAID and move more quickly to the rationale for this treatment trial.

3) One query I had about the rationale and flow of background literature was whether in fact the links between NAID and developmental problems have been definitively established or whether the data from this treatment trial will also contribute data on whether there is a connection between NAID and poorer outcomes, thus building a case for screening.

4) The first sentence of the trial objectives and hypotheses section could be more clearly written so it is clear that the trial is a comparison of oral iron plus dietary advice versus placebo plus dietary advice. At the moment it says the trial will assess oral iron plus advice with placebo and advice which is confusing.