**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** When are clinical trials registered?: an analysis of prospective versus retrospective registration

**Version:** 0  **Date:** 16 Sep 2015

**Reviewer:** Julia Rucklidge

**Reviewer's report:**

This is well described and discussed study looking at registration status of trials submitted to BMC journals.

It wasn't clear until the end of the manuscript that BMC doesn't require registration of clinical trials in order to be published in the journals. At the end of the introduction it is positioned that the study is looking at retrospective registration but really, it looked at registration status more generally.

I think the paper could be shortened significantly and yet still contain the essential information of the study. The discussion especially was too long and repetitive.

Did the authors check with authors of the 4 unregistered trials whether they really didn't register the article? It could be they simply didn't report the registry number.

I found Figure 2 redundant.

I think it was a shame, after all that work, that the authors didn't also look at selective outcome reporting. That is, look to see if for those studies that were prospectively registered whether there was a match between the registry and the article in terms of POMs. A number of studies have done that, for example: Scott, A., Rucklidge, J. J., & Mulder, R. T. (2015). Is Mandatory Prospective Trial Registration Working to Prevent Publication of Unregistered Trials and Selective Outcome Reporting? An Observational Study of Five Psychiatry Journals That Mandate Prospective Clinical Trial Registration. PloS One, 10(8), e0133718. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0133718. Such an investigation can be quite revealing and it would be a strength of the study if the authors went and gathered that information. As it stands, the study
simply reports on registration status which, while interesting, could be made more interesting by looking further into the registration status.

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