Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying important barriers to recruitment of patients in randomised clinical studies using a questionnaire for study personnel

Version: 0 Date: 25 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Catherine Arundel

Reviewer's report:

General
The barriers and facilitators to recruitment in trials is certainly an important element for consideration and investigation, however I feel that your use of limited and dated evidence to support your study e.g. difficulties with recruitment, work assessing barriers and facilitators to recruitment, does not accurately reflect the current status, and work previously conducted. I suggest it would be useful to review the full literature in relation to this, and to make clear how your work differs from, and adds to previous studies or reports.
Throughout the discussion you make some valid points with regards barriers, their impacts and potential importance for consideration, but you fail to explain why they are important or a key issue. You also appear to note elements as important which I struggled to find in your results. It may be these are there but are inconsistently labelled or equally it may be worth revisiting this section to provide supporting evidence from your results.
The manuscript would also benefit from a full proof read to ensure tense is appropriate and consistent, typo’s corrected where required, and % values provided consistently.

Specific
Methods: You note work completed previously by Kaur et al. Was this used in any way to form the basis of your survey? If so what was similar/different, if not why not?
Methods - Construction of Questionnaire; Page 5: It was difficult to follow what 5 free response alternatives were, and how these were changed. Some clarity here would help the reader.
Methods - Main Phase: You note mailing to 148 staff. Did this include those who had previously participated in your pilot? You note 'additional 10 reminders' how were these sent?

Results - Table1: Were the experience definitions included in the questionnaire or applied later?
Results - To Succeed with Inclusions: What is meant by 'involvement in the trial is fun'?
Results - To Succeed with Inclusions: You note co-authorship/proposing studies as important. Are these what is meant by 'academic driven' in Table 2? It may help the reader to use consistent terms here. What do you mean by inclusions rate - is this inclusion of a centre as a recruiting site or conversion of screened patients into recruited participants?
Results - Patient barriers: What do you mean by 'language problems'. As you provide a table for all other results sections it would be good to be consistent and provide one here too.
Results - Study barriers: You note a study wide website as being an important factor - for what?
Offering financial compensations is noted as being important - who is the compensation for, the study
team or the patient?

Discussion - You mention work by Donovan et al here, I suggest it would be useful to include this in the introduction too.

Discussion - You note that problems should be addressed as they arise. Is it not important to also consider potential problems, as you have described in your paper, from the outset?
Discussion - You note that the findings could be generalised outside of stroke trials, which elements could be, are there bits which don't generalise?
Discussion - Your strengths and limitations sections would benefit from some further clarity as to why the points you note are strengths or what the impact was if a limitation, and whether these were mitigated in any way.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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All images and figures within the manuscript should be genuine i.e. without evidence of manipulation. No specific feature within an image may be enhanced, obscured, moved, removed, or introduced. If you have concerns about the veracity of the figures you should choose the first option below.

**Statistical review**
Is it essential that this manuscript is seen by an expert statistician? If so, please give your reasons in your report.

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No