Reviewer’s report

Title: International Questionnaire Postal Response Rate: An experiment comparing no return postage to provision of International Postage Vouchers - “Coupon-Reponse International”

Version: 4 Date: 10 May 2004

Reviewer: Peter Elton

Reviewer’s report:

General

It would be helpful to know why the author felt that the intervention would make a difference. It is not clear whether the journalists were sent the questionnaire to their home or workplace. If the latter, the journalists would probably not pay for the postage anyway. Even with the intervention, the journalist had to make the effort to go to the post office. One study that was sent to the workplace (Groves BW Olsson RH Jr., Response rate to surveys with self-addressed, stamped envelopes versus a self-addressed label, Psychol Rep, 2000; 86; 1226-8) found that including a stamped return envelope, compared to just a self-adhering envelope, made no difference to the response rate. It is difficult to imagine a more cumbersome method of reimbursement would have any effect.

Despite the limitations of the study, it may be worth publishing so that others who are thinking of such a strategy are aware that it is unlikely to increase return rates.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Respond to comments above

There is no power calculation given. The study looks very underpowered.

References have been made to return from the internet-based cohort. The comment should be tempered by reference to the literature (eg VanDenKerhof et al Can J Anaesth ’004;51;449-54)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests:

None