Author's response to reviews

Title: A randomised controlled trial and cost effectiveness study of systematic screening (targeted and total population screening) versus routine practice for the detection of atrial fibrillation in the over 65s: (SAFE)

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Response to reviewers Report

Referee 1: Helen Rodgers

Suggested major revisions:

1. Authors unintentionally gave the impression that detection of an irregular pulse is diagnostic of AF.

Response: We don’t give that impression, see page 3 & 4 ‘The appropriate screening strategy to be employed’. The most appropriate screening test for AF (Page 4) clearly identifies the 12-lead ECG as the gold standard, the study simply compared the pulse taking with the gold standard. The pulse can be used as a pre-screen.

2. Targetted screening – prescription of dioxin has also been used as targeted screening.

Response: We used dioxin prescriptions to identify possible AF.

3. Unclear how the study would identify incident cases.

Response: The study does identify incident cases with a before and after computer search.

4. Secondary outcome measure references.

Response: Agreed – references now included.

5. Tense changes between beginning and end of paper.

Response: Agreed – tense changed where appropriate.

6. Paper ends abruptly.

Response: Agreed – alteration made.

7. Timescale and when results are expected inclusion.

Response: Agreed – now included.