Author's response to reviews

Title: A randomised trial of a 5 week, manual based, self-management programme for hypertension delivered in a cardiac patient club in Shanghai

Authors:

Feng Xue (fx101@york.ac.uk)
Wen Yao (yw612423@163.com)
Robert J Lewin (RJPL1@york.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for your review of this paper which was very helpful.

We have changed the title of this paper as suggested.

The one remaining suggestion is to change the way that we have dealt with missing data.

We understand that there are a number of methods for dealing with missing data (Source: http://www.tufts.edu/~gdallal/itt.htm) and that some researchers have a strong preference for one particular method.

One approach is to use a subject's last measurement as the final measurement. This is called Last Observation Carried Forward (LOCF).

Another approach finds an approximate data model using non-missing data and then interpolates the missing values with values found with the model.

A third approach looks for subjects who are just like the ones with missing data (age, sex, height, weight) and substitutes their data for the missing values.

We have consulted eminent medical statisticians in the UK with extensive publishing experience in high quality medical journals, who agree that the method we have used (Last Observation Carried Forward, LOCF) is normal practice in analysing clinical trial outcomes by using an intention-to-treat methodology. They have advised that using other data imputation methods was not superior and would make little difference to the conclusions unless we had a large number of missing outcomes. However the flow chart of recruitment and follow-up shows that 12 % were lost to follow-up at 4 months, a number typical of most such studies.

After discussion with the other researchers and advisors we wish to stay with the current analysis and hope that you will be prepared to publish this as it stands.

Yours sincerely
Feng Xue, for the publication group