Author's response to reviews

Title: Are they really refusing to travel? A qualitative study of prehospital records

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your further comments on the revised version of this paper. We were pleased that your reviewer felt that the paper should be accepted for publication following essential minor revisions and are happy to address the points made below.

Each of the suggested (shown in italics) minor essential revisions has been responded to below (new text underlined):

Abstract

Abstract results remove 'including' (used twice in same sentence): Removed.

Introduction

Background: First sentence - is this in the UK and if so, is this the right reference? In general in the background, the source of references should be made clearer - many of these are not UK and may or may not be transferable to the UK context: References have been linked to their country of origin in the text.

Last para correct: 'this study sought using...'. Corrected to "This study sought, using mixed methods, to investigate why patients refuse to travel following emergency call-out in a rural county."

Results

Don't repeat data from sample selection - but do give the numbers for the sampled month.

Superfluous data has been removed from the discussion but retained where it clarifies the results.

Discussion

Could be better structured: The discussion has been structured as follows-

Summary of main findings

Comparison with existing literature and implications for future practice
Strengths and limitations of the study

Conclusions and suggestions for future education and research

"Although RTT was estimated to cost GBP1.45 million this was not an entirely wasted resource because ambulance crews did provide an initial assessment. However, it is clear from the data that alternatives to an ambulance response based on prior telephone assessment may have been a more appropriate use of some of this resource."

Need to always be clear that this info is from crew documentation - reasons given by patients - as recorded by crews. This is a criticism I mad last time which has not been fully addressed. The crews cannot be assumed to always be truthful about reasons for non-conveyance in a situation where they are do not actually have protocols to make decisions to leave people at scene, but in reality do just that. This should be acknowledged, explained clearly to a generalist readership and maybe be included in the discussion:

Included under strengths and limitations is the following sentence:

"One limitation of the study included the data source, the written clinical records, from which qualitative information which was derived. The data gleaned from these records included reasons given by patients but interpreted and documented by crews. These were sometimes brief, consisting of a few words and therefore not enough to gain any in-depth understanding of why certain phenomena were occurring. It cannot always be assumed that the interpretations of patient reasons were accurate."

'Reported anecdotally' - where/how?: The following has been deleted - despite many calls involving RTT being described anecdotally by ambulance crews as occurring due to social problems

Overall - need to be clearer about whether the study aims to be relevant to UK or international context: The national/international context has been clarified in the conclusion-

"This study has shown that the term 'refusal to travel' was misleading as only 8% of our sample were recorded as not travelling to hospital against professional advice. New systems for responding to emergency calls, whether in the UK or in comparable health systems abroad, including the use of telephone triage, on-scene assessment and referral could lead to changes in the rate of 'refusal to travel'."

We hope these minor revisions meet with your approval and that the article is ready for publication.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Shaw

Niro Siriwardena

On behalf of the authors.