Author's response to reviews

Title: Incomplete evidence: the inadequacy of databases in tracing published adverse drug reactions in clinical trials

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PDF covering letter
1) Reviewer's comments: The reader could draw the conclusion by inference that RCTs are THE place to gather ADR data. A comment on valuable and reliable methods of assessing ADRs would be useful.

Our response: We have amended the line to include other methods used in assessing ADRs:

**Randomised controlled trials, in conjunction with case reports and observational studies, can potentially provide useful evidence on the frequencies of adverse effects.**

2) Reviewer's comments: There are too many "biases" out there already, rather than inventing another one ("indexing bias") - I would suggest simply refer to this problem a reporting/indexing limitation or deficiency.
On page 7 the authors state that failure to identify papers by searching will lead to an over-estimation of rate or severity of ADRs. Surely this could equally be underestimation.

Our response: We have removed the term "indexing bias" and mentioned limitations as suggested. Instead of "under or over-estimation", we have used the words unreliable estimates in the text:

**However, index-based searches for adverse effects may omit papers that do not report significant or serious adverse effects. Unreliable estimates of the rate or severity of drug adverse effects may occur as a result of these limitations in the current indexing system.**

3) Reviewer's comments: I would suggest making your recommendations (#2) stronger that journals should "require", not just ask authors to mention drug adverse effects in the abstract.
Our response: Amended as suggested.