Author's response to reviews

Title: A worked example of "best fit" framework synthesis: A systematic review of views concerning the taking of potential chemopreventive agents

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Editors,

Please find enclosed our responses to the reviewers’ comments on our paper: A worked example of “best fit” framework synthesis: A systematic review of views concerning the taking of potential chemopreventive agents

We would like to begin by thanking the reviewers for their valuable feedback.

**Reviewer 1:**

**Minor essential revisions:**

“One issue is the resultant model ...”: We have not made any revision regarding this comment for two reasons. Firstly, we appreciate the possible lack of clarity here in terms of the physical properties component of the model. The manner in which this component differs from “side-effects” is not made clear in this paper but relates to perceived and real consequences of taking an agent (side-effects), and possible problems in taking it (administration, eg. through their physical properties). We have not revised the text to explain this as we feel that the focus of this paper is the application and evaluation of the synthesis method, rather than the resulting model itself, the topic findings of the synthesis, which are cited as being described in detail elsewhere (Cooper et al 2010). Secondly, the relationships between the components, as correctly highlighted by the reviewer, are complex and possibly recursive. We feel this is represented by the arrows in the model which indicate how risk, benefit and risk/benefit balance feed back and forth into both decision-making and use. We have therefore not made any revisions.

**Discretionary revisions:**
“The issue of speed …”: Some instances of the word “rapid” have been removed, as we agree it was excessive! However, we feel that projects such as HTAs, with a 6-month or, at most, a one-year span, and which also involve reviews of effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, mathematical modelling, and, in some cases, a qualitative evidence synthesis element, does present a issue around timelines and the availability of members of research teams. We have added a comment to that effect (p.12). We have also included a comment on the limitation of this approach only being viable if a possible model is available in the new Limitations section at the end of the paper.

“Finally, the discussion around study quality … “: We do state explicitly that our focus was quality based on reporting only, but we have now explained our approach more fully on pp.8-9 and have been more explicit in terms of what we are assessing.

**Reviewer 2:**

**Minor essential revisions:**

References 11, 15 and 33 “fixed”

**Discretionary revisions:**

1. Text added p.5.
2. Text added p.6 to clarify the approach taken.
3. The approach was determined both by time and the need for a procedure to verify or challenge a single reviewer’s categorisation of the data. Text has been added to clarify this (p.7)
4. As Reviewer 1 above: text added, and tool placed in Appendix.
5. The current timeless do not permit such re-assessment, though we feel that the existing “gap analysis” does go some way to answering this query. Re: the relationships between the data; these were generated in part from the relationships in the pre-existing conceptual model, and in part by the primary reviewers’ interpretation of the data. We have revised Figure 1 (the representation of the pre-existing model), to reflect the need, decision-making and use relationships more explicitly, and explain the development of the new model more explicitly.(p.7-8).

6. Some limitations have now been included (pp.16-17).

7. We have added text on this on pp.14-15.

8. We have qualified this on p.14 by stating that it is the identification of the a priori framework that is more rapid, compared to other types of framework synthesis, and the coding is more rapid than grounded-theory based approaches.

9. Andrew?

10. This is correct – the appropriateness of an apparently “appropriate” framework may only be apparent during and post-synthesis! This has been added to the Limitations.

11. A sensitivity analysis, which was not necessary. Text added (pp.9, 10)