A comparison of small monetary incentives to convert survey non-respondents: A randomized control trial.

This paper presents results of a randomised controlled trial among 1,328 US veterans of the effectiveness on response to a mailed one page questionnaire of including a $2 versus a $5 incentive. The veterans in the study had previously been invited by mail (and up to six attempts to contact by telephone) to participate in a study assessing health literacy skills. The main survey had also included a $25 incentive for veterans to agree to a survey that lasted 1 hour, administered face-to-face in a health clinic.

The authors wished to characterise the non responders to this survey and so chose to mail a one page questionnaire comprising 10 items to assess health literacy, marital status, race, education employment status and income. Non respondents were randomised to an unconditional $2 versus an unconditional $5 incentive with the one page questionnaire.

The paper also assesses cost effectiveness of each incentive, using the cost of the labour required to administer the questionnaire survey. The paper provides results that will be of interest to other researchers collecting data by postal questionnaire.

Major compulsory revisions

Methods: As per CONSORT guidelines the authors should describe their methods of randomisation, and explain how allocation was concealed from the researchers conducting the study. For example, was the university affiliated survey centre independent of the authors of this research?

Minor essential revisions

Table 1. I am not clear to what tests the p-values shown relate to. In the methods, I understood that the chi-squared test was used to assess whether the demographic and health characteristics of participants randomised to the two incentive conditions were balanced. The column percentages in the table sum to 100%. I was therefore expecting a single p-value for each characteristic overall, but there are p-values shown for each level of each category.
Perhaps the authors tested proportions responding within each category by incentive condition (e.g. the proportion of women who received the $5 incentive that responded compared to the proportion of women who received the $2 incentive that responded)? If so, the table should show the percentage of each category responding, not the percentage responding overall.

Table 4 repeats much of the data contained in Table 2.

Discretionary revisions

None.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.