Author's response to reviews

Title: Using e-mail recruitment and an online questionnaire to establish effect size: A worked example

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

Thank you very much for your swift response to our resubmission and for the comments of the reviewers. We were pleased that the reviewers had taken the time to consider our paper again and hope our amendments meet their requirements.

Reviewer #1 (Helen Atherton) stated that no further revisions were necessary.

Reviewer #2 (Ramal Moonesinghe)

1. The authors have clarified their work in this manuscript to some extent. According to them the aim of the study was to assess the feasibility of using a simple e-mail recruitment strategy and online questionnaire to produce an estimated effect size based upon expert opinion to inform sample size estimation for a randomised control trial. They have shown how to calculate the sample size, i.e. the number of participants needed for the e-PIS study to detect a statistically significant difference in recruitment rates. Is this methods only applicable to detecting significant differences in recruitment rates for different studies? How can one use this method for a different effect size (e.g. effectiveness of an intervention to increase vaccination rates)? Here we want to calculate the
sample size required to detect a significant increase in vaccination rates (not recruitment rates). This has to be clearly addressed in the paper.

We have added the following paragraph to page 8 of the manuscript:

Whilst the example in this paper shows how the methodology could be used to establish an effect size based on an increase in recruitment rates, it could be easily adapted to suit other studies. For example, for a study that tests the effectiveness of an intervention to increase vaccination rates it is reasonable to expect that the intervention would only be used outside of a research environment if it increased vaccination rates sufficiently. The questionnaire (appendix 1) could be adapted to ask participants how much the intervention would need to increase the vaccination rate by before they would implement the intervention in their area. The result would still be a meaningful effect size that could be used in a sample size calculation.

We trust that these modifications have addressed the points raised by the reviews.

Yours sincerely,

Professor S Wilson