Author's response to reviews

Title: Towards socially inclusive research: an evaluation of telephone questionnaire administration in a multilingual population

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Author's response to reviews:

Dr Lolu da-Silva
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17th October 2007

Dear Dr Lolu da-Silva

MS: 1566674585154405
Towards socially inclusive research: an evaluation of telephone questionnaire administration in a multilingual population
Elizabeth Dormandy, Katrina Brown, Erin P Reid and Theresa M Marteau

Thank you for considering this paper for BMC Medical Research Methodology. We are grateful to the reviewers for their helpful and insightful comments. We have revised the paper in line with their comments and have responded as outlined below. The page numbers refer to the revised copy:

Reviewer One
Compulsory revisions
Are the two methods of administration equivalent?
We agree with the reviewer that this is an important point and have addressed this in the following pages
Page Four to Five: We have added a second paragraph to the background section which reports on the literature on phone surveys including the paper by Hocking and colleagues.
Page Nine: We have added details on the eight people who did not complete the telephone survey in the first papragraph. The reviewer is correct in assuming that a questionnaire was sent in the post to these participants.
Page 11: We have added a section in the first paragraph of the discussion addressing the issue of comparability of methods, explaining that we are not
comparing telephone with postal but comparing a choice of methods with postal alone.

Comparability. Again we agree that this is an important issue and have addressed it as follows

Page Five: We have included the findings of two randomised trials comparing postal and telephone responses.

Pages Seven to Eight: We have included details of the scales assessed using the questionnaire

Page Ten We have compared the responses to the knowledge and attitude scales by completion method.

Page 11 to 12: We have discussed the implications of the observed differences in the responses from the two methods of questionnaire completion.

Conclusion: We have included comments on comparability in the Conclusion

Conclusion: We have revised the conclusion such that it now reads ¿Studies requiring data to be collected by questionnaire may obtain higher response rates from both English and non-English speakers when a choice of telephone or postal administration (and where necessary, an interpreter) is offered compared to offering postal administration only. This approach will, however, incur additional research costs and uncertainty remains about the equivalence of responses obtained from the two methods.¿

In the abstract, SCT should be spelt out. This has been changed.

Discretionary revisions:

Use of mobile or landline: These data have not been included. We used whichever method the participant preferred.

The first section of the abstract is an aim rather than background. We have added a sentence describing the background.

Missing data MAY bias results. This has been changed

Use of interviewers who speak appropriate languages. While we agree that costs would be reduced if interviewers spoke the appropriate languages, one would be hard pressed to find research assistants who could speak the twenty languages used by participants in this study.

Reviewer Two

Compulsory revisions

Determination of ¿speak English¿ This has been defined more clearly on page eight.

What approach was used to calculate a confidence interval around the response rates? We have given the reference for this method (Gardner MJ and Altman DG, Statistics with Confidence, London, 1989, British Medical Journal)
The costs results seem tangential to the rest of the manuscript. We have increased the profile of the costs by describing more fully the cost analysis in the last paragraph of the introduction on page six. Implementing the approach we describe will most often require costs to be included in grant applications. Given the costs are not readily available elsewhere, we believe their inclusion in this paper will increase the likelihood that researchers will use the method of collecting questionnaire responses associated with the highest response rate, as described in this paper. While we acknowledge that costs are not the major findings of this study, we are keen to include them in this paper.

Expand the literature review. We have expanded the literature review by adding paragraphs on pages four to five.

Consider the independent contributions of giving participants a choice. In the first paragraph of the discussion on page 11 we have considered this point.

The Methods, page 6, are substantially redundant with regard to the Setting and Participants. We have removed duplicated data on pages six and seven.

Discretionary revisions:
Self-administered questionnaires would seem like a more standard terminology than self completion questionnaires:
We have changed the terminology and now refer to self administered questionnaires.
We have made other changes to the text to ensure that the changes outlined above are embedded in the flow of the paper.

Thank you for the opportunity to revise this paper. We feel the paper is much improved as a result. We look forward to your response.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Dormandy Katrina Brown Erin Reid Theresa Marteau