Title: Nurse telephone triage in out-of-hours GP practice: determinants of independent advice and return consultation

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

Thank you very much for your confirmation that BMC Family Practice will publish our manuscript (above) pending formatting requirements.

We have tried to address all the issues that were raised as carefully as we could. Nevertheless, there are a few details that may need some further attention that we would like to list here.

1. There was no explicit funding of the study other than The Department of General Practice covering the expenses made during data collection and analysis. We were not entirely sure whether or not we were supposed to mention this under ‘Acknowledgements’ as we have done in the current (revised) version. Please let us know whether this is adequately stated or not.

2. There were a few references that are corrected in the current version that keep going wrong when applying Reference Manager. Perhaps no further action is required, as we believe they are correct in the textfile of the uploaded version. However, just to make sure you are of potential errors, we mention them here in chronological order:
   - No. 6 (Report from the Kings College)
   - No. 9 and 10 (both Dutch PhD theses)
   - No. 16 and 17 (two books)
   - No. 28 (we just received the information that this article will be published in the coming month; perhaps it should therefore read ‘in press’?)

   N.B. The errors in ref. 28 are probably caused by the fact that PubMed is still processing this article (e.g. my name is misspelled: instead of reading ‘Moll van Charante’ (being my full surname), ‘Moll’ and ‘van’ are taken to be first names or omitted altogether, resulting in ‘Charante EM’ etc.)

3. We have cropped Figure 2 as much as we could. In doing so, we removed the text that was located closely to the X-axis, reading: ‘Percentage of calls with nurse telephone advice alone (n=8)’. We believe it would be nice if this line would be closer to the figure than the text of the legend, that starts with: ‘NTAA rates (dots) and their 95% confidence limits (lines) for each of eight nurses. The upper lines indicate…etc.’ Please note that the font of the text following ‘Figure legends’ is still Times new Roman, while in the uploaded Figure 1 it is Arial (as requested).

   Perhaps you can comment on the last sentence of the legend of Figure 2: ‘The numbers in the boxes represent the nurse identification numbers.’ (twice ‘numbers’ is perhaps unnecessary?)

4. Professor Patrick Bindels, when reading the final revised version, suggested to add the range of NTAA-rates that was reported in the results to the abstract. He argued that it would make more sense to the readers if we were to indicate the crude range first and then present the finding, after correcting for case-mix differences, that the inter-nurse variability between the nurses remained (very) significant. Therefore, the first sentence of the results (abstract) now reads as follows:

   ‘The mean NTAA rate was 27.5% – ranging from 15.5% to 39.4% for the eight
nurses.’ I hope that you will accept this small change in the text of the abstract. By the way, we used the expression ‘ranging from …to…’ here, instead of ‘varying between …and…’ Which one is best? If the latter one is to be preferred, it also has to be changed in the main text (see under ‘Results’, last paragraph of page 7).

Thank you very much indeed for taking care of the further formatting procedures. Please do contact us if we can provide any help in the course of this process.

Yours sincerely

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