Author's response to reviews

Title: Haemoglobin, anaemia, dementia and cognitive decline in the elderly, a systematic review

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Version: 2 Date: 24 April 2008

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

Thank you for the comments from the reviewers with regard to the paper, ‘Haemoglobin, anaemia, dementia and cognitive decline in the elderly, a systematic review’.

I have responded to the reviewers comments below and hope that this is clear and helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.
I have uploaded the revised manuscript as requested in the author guidance. I hope everything is clear. I have removed the instructions detailing the position of the tables/figures as I imagine that this is now something that you will decide if you agree to publish.

With best wishes and many thanks

Ruth Peters

Reviewer's report
Title: Haemoglobin, anaemia, dementia and cognitive decline in the elderly, a systematic review
Version: 1 Date: 29 February 2008
Reviewer: Anna R Atti

Reviewer's report:
The authors review the evidence for a relationship between haemoglobin concentration and cognitive decline/dementia in elderly. The question is well defined and the issue is of interest given the high prevalence of anaemia and cognitive deficits at older ages.
Methods seems to be appropriate although the little number of study concerning this issue deserve an explanation either in the methods section or in the discussion. Such limitations should be stated more clarly.

This has now been added to both the method and discussion.

The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? *
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?*
6.
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?*
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
9. Is the writing acceptable?*
*do you need us to respond here?
- Major Compulsory Revisions
I suggest you to update your research since it was based on the period 1996-2006. It's likely that a few more papers have been published in the last two years, however, it would give a more comprehensive review of the literature. We have re-run all the searches – unfortunately no new longitudinal data was found. This seems to be a particularly under researched area so far.
- Minor Essential Revisions
  Â· Please, CHECK REFERENCES (number 1 is missing from the text!) This has been done.
  Â· On page 1, the last sentenceâ#:
  â##The group at highest risk from low or high haemoglobin levels may well be the elderly as anemia is common as are other co-morbiditiesâ# is not clear enough to a non English mother tongue. All text has been re-read thoroughly rephrased.
  Â· On page 3 gm/dlâ# is a non-sense either use mg/dL or g/L.
  - Discretionary Revisions
    This is interesting as g/dl is the standard measure used in the UK and in the majority of the publications that we cite (refs no 3-11, 14-15 and 20-21) – we would prefer to leave it as g/dl if possible as this seems widely applicable.
  NONE
  - Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions
  - An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
  - Needs some language corrections before being published
  Hopefully this is now resolved.
  - No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
  'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

Reviewer's report
Title: Haemoglobin, anaemia, dementia and cognitive decline in the elderly, a systematic review
Version: 1 Date: 2 April 2008
Reviewer: Cinzia Maraldi
Reviewer's report:
Major revision: Author may want to better explain the rationale for using a systematic review of only three studies (and only two longitudinal) that have similar results or results in the same direction (anemia as a risk factor for dementia).

The use of systematic review techniques is to ensure that the reviewing process in thorough and without bias, it should result is a trawl of the literature which indicates the amount of evidence that is available, either for or against the hypothesis. If there is little published in the area then few studies will be found, however, this does not negate the use of systematic review methodology. The studies that were found are reported, the fact that they have results in the same direction reflects their findings but does not have any bearing on the methodology that we used to find them. It is true that there is little data out there and that is one of the findings of our paper, we conclude as best we can on the evidence that we have and suggest that further research needs to be carried out to strengthen the evidence base.

Further explanation has been added to the method and the discussion.
The second study hypothesis cannot be verified, as there are no studies with that specific aim.

True – this indicates that there is not literature out there to allow an answer, the hypothesis was also generated a priori.

Overall, this study adds limited information to the current literature on this topic.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being Published Hopefully this is now resolved

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.