Author's response to reviews

Title: Corticosteroid and antiviral therapy for Bell palsy: A network meta-analyses

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report:

A meta-regression on 3 studies cannot provide reliable results, please omit it.

The same applies for NNT/NNH.

We have removed the meta-regression results, see page 9. However, we would like to keep NNT/NNH in the paper since most clinicians understand this parameter better than just presenting OR.

There is not enough replication for each treatment effect. Thus, combine the data from direct and indirect comparisons based on pooled RE ORs (see Song). Then, compare the findings with those of the mixed effects model.

We actually assessed discrepancy of results between direct and network meta-analysis as suggested in references 20 & 32. Results were described in “comparison of direct & network meta-analysis”, page 13 & table 3.

Estimation of adjusted indirect treatment effects by RE ORs, as appeared in Song’s paper, is not flexible if there are > 3 treatment groups that we want to compare. However, we have performed pooling for Acy+Pred versus Val+Pred and then compared this result with that from network meta-analysis via multi-level approach. Results are described below. We can see that the two methods of estimation are not
significantly different from each other and the adjusted method does not add any extra information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>treatments</th>
<th>Adjusted indirect</th>
<th>Network meta</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lnOR</td>
<td>selnOR</td>
<td>lnOR</td>
<td>selnOR</td>
<td>∆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acy+Pred (3 m)</td>
<td>-0.145</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.327</td>
<td>-0.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acy+Pred (6 m)</td>
<td>0.447</td>
<td>1.133</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>-0.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing in