Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with breastfeeding cessation in nursing mothers in a peer support programme in Eastern Lancashire

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to reviewer’s comments

We are again every grateful to the reviewer’s critique of our manuscript. We have provided the responses to the specific issues raised following the 2\textsuperscript{nd} review below.

a. The issues raised in points (1) and (2) have been addressed by the statistician. The comments made are attached.

b. Points (3) and (4) have also been addressed in the relevant section of the paper.

Once again we greatly appreciate the efforts of all the reviewers in critiquing this paper.
Statistician’s response to comments from reviewer # 1

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Statistician’s response to point (1): Breastfeeding duration is not censored for more than half the sample. Censoring in survival analysis only occurs if at the end of follow up the subject has not had the event of interest. In this paper the event of interest is stopping breastfeeding so the subjects who are censored are those who are still breastfeeding at the end of follow up. This is only a small percentage of the subjects.

Statistician’s response to point (2): The reviewer is correct to point out that the ‘clumping’ of data around the time points of 6 weeks, 17 weeks and 6 months is likely to contribute to the skewness of the mean duration of breastfeeding. As in all survival studies, the median duration of breastfeeding would be a more appropriate measure than the mean.

In this study standard survival analysis methods are used and these are based on the ranks of the survival times rather than the actual survival times. Cox regression is a semi-parametric method and makes no assumptions about the actual distribution of survival time. As long as the hazard ratio is constant over time the Cox regression model is appropriate for these data. However, the ‘clumping’ is likely to lead to many ties in the ranking of survival time. The Cox regression method in StatsDirect used in the analysis of these data incorporates Breslow’s method for dealing with ties and this is sufficient for dealing with the ties in this study (Breslow 1974).


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