Author's response to reviews


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Author's response to reviews: see over
Authors’ Responses to the Reviewer’s Comments


We sincerely thank the Reviewer for the time it took to provide his thorough and thoughtful comments and edits to our manuscript. Please find below our responses to each of these comments. We have included a ‘tracked changes’ version of our manuscript which indicates the changes we made to the manuscript based on the Reviewer’s comments. We have also included a ‘clean copy’ of the manuscript (i.e., changes made and accepted without ‘track changes’ shown).

Best wishes,

Gabrielle van der Velde
Toronto, May 21, 2011

Comments to Authors:

1. P(age) 1, locations 1 to 9, suggest inserting [ON] after [Toronto].
   - We have inserted [ON] after [Toronto], as suggested by the Reviewer.

2. P 1, Contact, l(ine) 7. Suggest inserting [Canada] after the mail code.
   - We have inserted [Canada] after the mail code, as suggested by the Reviewer.

3. P 3, Trial registration. Include the date the trial was registered, and the date the first patient was randomized.
   - We have included this information, as suggested by the Reviewer (see below Abstract).

4. P 4, paragraph 1, l 10,11. Suggest rewording as [...] has changed be over 10 times during a [...]. Fold is not a well defined concept. The word increased is not necessary since numbers bigger than 1 imply an increase and numbers less than 1 imply a decrease. In truth the change over the baseline is 10.8 while the ratio of the end relative to the beginning is 11.8.
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.

5. P 4, p(aragraph) 2, l 6. Is [significantly] a statistical judgment? If not, replace [significantly] by some other word such as [dramatically].
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.

   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.

   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.

8. P 5, p 2, l 4. Replace [failed to] by [did not]. It is a failure if they work and were not detected, yet if they are NOT cost-effective, it is not a failure.
9. P 7, p 3, l 1 and 6. Both of these [significant] seem to be clinical judgments and so should be replaced by something like [clinically important].
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.
10. P 9, p 3, l 1,2. Rewrite as [...] at 6 weeks, and 3, 6, 9, and 12 months [...] just like P 27, Table 3 and Figure 1 and Table 2 in the published protocol for the trial.
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.
11. P 10, p 2, l 11 to 14. How well are these measured? Since this could be an important part of the economic analysis, some checking should be sought to ensure their veracity.
   - We have added a sentence describing our methods for checking the veracity of self-reported co-interventions by participants.
12. P 12, p 1, l 2,3. Add [d] to [use] to read [used] and delete the phrase [traffic to be accessed first when paying for] as it is used twice.
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.
13. P 12, p 3, l 4. What is the measure of agreement to be used as it is missing from the analysis section, and what is your criterion for acceptable agreement?
   - A sentence describing the measures of reliability and threshold value for acceptable agreement has been added, as recommended by the Reviewer.
14. P 13, p 3, l 2. Which ones, there are hundreds?
   - Agreed that there are hundreds, so have inserted a general statement in brackets at the end of the sentence.
15. P 14, p 1, l 8. Which confidence levels will be used?
   - We have added 50%, 75% and 95% confidence levels in brackets after the words ‘confidence ellipses.
16. P 14, p 2, l 11. Where is a reference to these techniques, and a justification for using 10,000 replicates?
   - A reference has been added, as recommended by the Reviewer.
17. P 17, p 1, l 2. Replace [ranging] by [varying].
   - We have edited the sentence, as suggested by the Reviewer.
18. P 17, p 2, l 1. By deleting those with missing baseline values but have been randomized, you are no longer doing an intent to treat analysis and you run the risk of a biased assessment. Please provide a justification of this task, as your sample size justification in Reference 17 anticipates you will have a 30% loss.
   - The issue that the Reviewer has raised will not be a concern since at this point in time, data collection for baseline data is nearly completed (95%) and there is no significant missing baseline data (<0.5%).
19. P 17, p 2, l 3. Last observation carried forward is rated as the worst technique for imputation in many texts on imputation. Why did you choose that method?
   - The problem that other approaches for dealing with missing data are equally limited. All imputation methods are flawed because there is the assumption that data are missing at random. It is for this reason that we have outlined methods for conducting sensitivity analyses to determine the robustness of the results to assumptions regarding the missing data (i.e., worst case/ best
case scenarios). See the third sentence under the section heading: Missing Data and Loss to Follow-up (page 18 of the ‘track changes’ manuscript).

20. P 17, p 2, l 8. Provide references for the imputation analysis.
   - We have provided references for the imputation methods (References 58 and 59).

21. P 18, p 2, l 7. If they are published, provide some references.
   - We have added references, as recommended by the Reviewer.

22. General comment. Reference 17, the trial protocol, had an incorrect computation for the adjustment for missingness. The sample size added 30% when it should have divided by the compliment of 30%, ie 0.7, to get 489 or 163 per arm, rather than the 444 or 148 per arm. If the trial is not yet completed, then the revised sample size should be considered particularly if the high rate of drop out is close to 30%.
   - Thank you for your correction on our adjustment to the sample size. Yes, we did multiple the sample size by 0.30 instead of dividing it by its complement in order to achieve the additional number of individuals that we would need to recruit. Currently, our rate of drop out is significantly lower than 30%. Thus, we should have a sufficient sample to meet our sample size requirements.

A random sample of 10 R(eference)s was checked for accuracy and some others were checked out of interest. The BMC journals try to publish all authors so they all can be listed, rather than leaving the last author [Zeiss E] out of R 2, l 1 in place of [et al]. Other Rs have many more authors! Also, this reviewer likes to see the issue number as it makes it easier to find the R when one want to get it from online databases.

23. P 21, R 1, l 2. Insert [(6)] after [342].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

24. P 21, R 2, l 2. Insert [(8 Suppl)] after [20].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

25. P 21, R 3, l 1. Delete [In].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

26. P 21, R 3, l 2 uses the short form for the J while R 6 and 42 use the long form. Choose one for all Rs and use it throughout.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

27. P 21, R 6, l 2. Insert [(11)] after [53].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

28. P 21, R 9, l 2. Insert [(3)] after [7].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.

29. P 21, R 11, l 1. The date format is not clear whether it was intended to be February 11 or November 2. Indeed the date is November 2 and the page number is A1. The date format chosen should be specified. If you want to use something close to the Canadian standard for dates, try using [2009-Nov-02, A1] as an indicator for its location.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
30. P 21, R 12, l1. The fifth author has initials [JW], and l 2 insert [(19)] after [57].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
31. P 21, R 13, l 1. The fifth author has initials [JW], and on l 2, rewrite [whiplahs] as [whiplash] and insert [(5)] after [57].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
32. P 21, R 14, l 1. While the last author is John Frank, the database has him with his first initial and not both initials! On l 2, insert [(1)] after [32].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
33. P 21,22, R 17, l 1,2. The fifth author has initials [HM], the ninth author has initials [JA] and the last author has initials [JW]. On l 3, rewrite as [Whiplash-associated Disorders:] and l 4 delete [BMC].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
34. P 22, R 20, l 2. Where is this located? [Toronto ON]? If so, insert it on l 2.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
35. P 22, R 24, l 2. Insert [(3)] after [29].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
37. P 22, R 32. Delete the periods and so rewrite as [NC].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
38. P 22, R 33. The journal and citation are missing and should be [J Roy Statist Soc (B);34(2):187-202].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
39. P 23, R 37, l 1. Rewrite as [Kleinbaum DG:].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
40. P 23, R 39 is missing the authors which are [Gold MR, Siegel JE, Russel LB, Weinstein MC(Eds)].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
41. P 23, R 40 can delete the periods after authors initials to read [Lin DY, Feuer EJ, Etzioni R, Wax Y:] and delete the [In] in front of the journal name.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
43. P 23, R 46, l 2. Insert [(6)] after [255].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
44. P 23, R 52, l 3. Correct the citation to [2006, 6:68.].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.
45. P 24, R 59 has 2 more authors [Cheruvu L, Corcari R:]. On l 3, insert [(6)] after [26].
   - We have edited the reference, as suggested by the Reviewer.