Author's response to reviews

Title: Newspaper Coverage of Mental Illness in the UK, 1992-2008

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear BMC Public Health Editorial Board,

This letter outlines the further changes made to the manuscript “Newspaper Coverage of Mental Illness in the UK, 1992-2008” in response to the referees’ reports on our first set of revisions. **Referees’ comments are in bold**, and our comments follow.

Referee 2: “In particular, they do not seem to have addressed my point: “... exactly how much change was expected and how much would meet criteria for improvement is not suggested in the Method.” In a quantitative study one normally estimates the degree of change expected, as that guides the investigators on how much data to collect and what degree of change would be regarded as significant, clinically (or socially in this case) and statistically. The words “greater” and “improve” in the hypotheses are insufficiently specific.

The paragraph at the bottom of page 6 describing the hypotheses in detail has now been expanded to explicitly state what is considered an ‘improvement’ and ‘greater’. We also explored the possibility of including a post-hoc power analysis, but concluded that post-hoc calculations are now generally discouraged. See, for example: Zumbo, BD and Hubley, AM: **A note on misconceptions concerning prospective and retrospective power. The Statistician** 1998, 47:385-388. Nesheim, B-I: **Commentary: approach to power calculations has to be realistic. BMJ** 2001, 322:1462. Senn, SJ: **Power is indeed irrelevant in interpreting completed studies. BMJ** 2002, 325:1304.

However, an additional paragraph has been added to the limitations section (page 16) regarding the absence of a sample size calculation.

We hope our further revisions have adequately addressed the remaining concerns, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Robert Goulden

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