Author's response to reviews

Title: Screening and brief intervention for alcohol problems in Dr George Mukhari Hospital out-patients in Gauteng, South Africa: a single-blinded randomized controlled trial protocol

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report
Title: Screening and brief intervention for alcohol problems in Dr George Mukhari Hospital out-patients in Gauteng, South Africa: a single-blinded randomized controlled trial protocol
Version: 1 Date: 26 January 2012
Reviewer: Morten Hesse
Reviewer's report:

Major revision:
The authors should give a thorough justification for the primary outcome variable used to evaluate the intervention. The Cochrane review from 2007 analysed grams of alcohol as the outcome variable. There may be good reasons for using drinking days instead, but these should be stated.

Response: In South Africa one standard drink is 12 grams of alcohol, so the number of drinks per week can be converted into total grams of alcohol per week. [It is a combined response of drinking days and number of drinks on a typical day] In the text below is added:
The primary outcome measure used in this study is the change in drinks per week (one standard drink=12 grams of alcohol) from baseline to follow-up, as estimated from the first two AUDIT questions.

Minor revisions:
The authors should screen their manuscript for redundant statements. Examples include that the unit of randomization is the individual, that patients with probable alcohol dependence were referred for further management, etc.

R: “unit of randomization” is once in the abstract and once in the text. One “patients with probable alcohol dependence were referred for further management” under exclusion criteria is deleted, while the one under procedure is retained.

A clinical point: What will be done with pregnant at-risk drinkers?

R: The protocol states under exclusion criteria that “those who are pregnant,..will all be excluded.”

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.
The primary outcome measure used in this study is the change in drinks per week (one standard drink=12 grams of alcohol) from baseline to follow-up, as estimated from the first two AUDIT questions.