Author's response to reviews

Title: Pragmatic assessment of the relative efficiency of outreach chlamydia screening events conducted in non-clinical settings

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Victorino Silvestre  
Journal Editorial Office  
BioMed Central

28 February 2012

Dear Dr/Mr Silvestre

Re: Resubmission of research article - *A simple way to compare the efficiency of outreach chlamydia screening activities*

Francis J Bowden, Marian J Currie, Maureen Todkill, Mathias Schmidt, Sue Webeck, Rendry Del Rosario, Tim Bavinton and Alexandra Tyson BMC Public Health

We have reviewed our manuscript in respect to the amendments suggested by the editors and reviewer one. Reviewer two made no further comments. We hope the manuscript is now worthy of publication.

We have made the following changes:

Editors’ comments

"The authors revised their manuscript appropriately. Yet, few comments remain. Please address the remaining comments of rev. 1 and especially the following needs emphasis:

The paper now focuses on defining key performance indicators, describing how they can be used in evaluation of chlamydia screening and how these could be useful for other evaluation studies. That is a clear focus and useful to others who conduct such screening, yet the authors still want to conclude on actual effectiveness. Lacking is the definition on when they consider their approach to be effective, i.e. what are the chosen thresholds of the different effectiveness-parameters and how are these thresholds established (a priori)? This should be elaborated. Also, based on what definition do they consider a setting to be more effective than another setting (a priori).

We did not set thresholds for efficiency as we intend our measures to be used for comparative purposes only: for example, how many specimens were collected at event A compared to event B. We would consider event A to be more efficient than event B if it yielded a greater number of specimens in a shorter time or if it resulted in identifying a greater number of cases. As we intimate in the title (A simple way to compare) and state in paragraph two of the discussion our measures are not intended to be anything more than simple comparators.

To state that details on the SOC2 method will be published elsewhere without providing reference is not appropriate and also not useful to readers. When details are available, they need to be entered in current paper."

We have removed this statement.
Reviewer 1: Rachel Sacks-Davis

Minor essential revisions

1. We have replaced the / as a symbol for per throughout the manuscript.

2. We have inserted the full stop at the end of paragraph two of the discussion.

3. We have removed the typo 3 from the word “collected” in paragraph six of the discussion.

4. We have inserted A into the title - A simple way to compare the efficiency of outreach chlamydia screening activities.

5. We have revised the final sentence of the introduction and split it into two sentences
   “We used data collected during the first eight months of this second phase to compare the efficiency of the screening sites and events. Such information could be used by program managers and funders in many jurisdictions to maximise the efficiency of chlamydia, and other, screening activities.”

6. Major essential revision - broadening of the aim beyond the SOC2 program.
   Please see second sentence above - we have suggested in the aim that our measures may have wider application. Moreover, we suggest in the Conclusion section that the measures can be used in a variety of settings.

7. As previously stated we have removed the statement that more detailed information would be presented elsewhere.

8. We have replaced the sentence:
   “Participants were provided with written information about chlamydia testing and the method of follow-up – only for individuals with positive tests”
   with
   “Participants were provided with written information about chlamydia testing and follow-up methods.”

9. We have started a new paragraph at “Individuals were considered to have been…”

10. We have made these amendments as suggested:
    Consider making the following amendment because the sentence is placed in the description of the event methods rather than the analytical methods: Change “we were unable to control for people who approached the staff more than once” to “we were unable to determine whether people approached the staff more than once and were therefore unable to rule out that some people were counted more than once in the denominator.” In the following sentence I believe that “determine whether” is the correct usage rather than “determine if”.

11. The sentence, “If the number of chlamydia screens performed is the principal outcome measure of a successful program…”, implies that there will be a quantitative comparison made between the efficiency of the SOC2 program and other programs; however, no such comparison is made. The authors say that they have done this in the response to reviewers (response to Rachel Sacks-Davis, major compulsory revisions 5); however, the comparison is only made in general terms and there is no specific comparison between the relative efficiency of this program compared to the previously published studies. In order to demonstrate the relevance of the study in the context of other previous research, quantitative comparisons to previous program efficiency results should be made if possible.

   We are unable to identify any other studies that are directly comparable to our study. However, we have discussed the study by Morris et al in greater detail.

12. In relation to the sentence, “while case yields from population screening…,” is there quantitative data available on case yields from clinic-based services? If these are available, a direct comparison would be valuable.
We have included direct comparisons with locally available data and data from the United Kingdom.

We hope the revised manuscript is acceptable to you and look forward to your decision. We also wish you the very best for the festive season and the coming year.

Yours sincerely

Dr Marian Currie  
Research Program Manager