Author’s response to reviews

Title: Screening and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful alcohol use among hospital outpatients in South Africa: results from a randomized controlled trial

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Version: 6 Date: 17 May 2013

Author’s response to reviews:

: Screening and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful alcohol use among hospital outpatients in South Africa: results from a randomized controlled trial
Version: 5 Date: 9 May 2013
Reviewer: Simon Coulton
Reviewer’s report:
The comments in the review have been addressed by the authors.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Title: Screening and brief interventions for hazardous and harmful alcohol use among hospital outpatients in South Africa: results from a randomized controlled trial
Version: 5 Date: 15 May 2013
Reviewer: Natalie Johnson
Reviewer’s report:
Minor Compulsory Revisions
1. Since Babor and colleagues(2001) state that the "the total AUDIT score will reflect the patient’s level of risk related to alcohol" (p.19), it would (in my opinion) be preferable to use the term "AUDIT score" when referring to the primary outcome rather than terms like "alcohol consumption" or "alcohol use" (for
example, in the Measures section on p. 7 the second heading would be "AUDIT score" not "alcohol consumption", and in the Participant characteristics section on p.9 it would say "AUDIT score" or "proportion who screened positive for hazardous or harmful drinking" rather than "AUDIT level of alcohol use"). Similarly, I would like the null hypothesis to be rephrased in terms of the study outcome measure (eg., so it suggests that the mean AUDIT scores between those in the intervention and control groups will not be statistically significantly different).
R: Corrected accordingly

2. I'm still unsure what a "chronic hospital outpatient" is (p.8).
R: As this is explained under procedure:, as below, “chronic”is deleted on p.8 recruited from five different out-patient departments, i.e., family practice (10.4%), general out-patient department (48.0%), cardiology (10.5%), diabetes (19.4%) and ear nose and throat department (7.1%) and from a dispensary (4.7%)

3. In Table 1, I would expect one p-value for a chi-square test comparing AUDIT score categories between the arms (eg., a 4 x 2 table [ie., AUDIT 0-6/7, 7/8-15, 16-19 and 20] and group allocation [intervention, control]).
R: This has been corrected, as below

Health variables
Alcohol use (AUDIT score)
AUDIT total (M,SD) 11.3 (3.4) 12.7 (3.4) <0.001
AUDIT (7-15) 167 (85.2) 152 (77.9) 3.43 0.064
AUDIT (16-19) 29 (14.8) 43 (22.1)

4. There are a number of grammatical or typographical errors throughout the manuscript (for example, should the first line read ".... consumption of 9.5 litre[s of] pure alcohol per year"? Should the first line in the second paragraph read ".... has been [to be] an effective preventive ...."? In addition, in the section on randomisation says patients "are recruited" rather than patients "were recruited").
R: Corrected

REF:
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