Author's response to reviews

Title: Influenza vaccination, inverse care and homelessness: cross-sectional survey of eligibility and uptake during the 2011/12 season in London.

Authors:

Alistair Story (Alistairstory@gmail.com)
Robert W Aldridge (rob.aldridge@gmail.com)
Tat Gray (tatgray@gmail.com)
Stan Burridge (info@londonpathway.org.uk)
Andrew C Hayward (a.hayward@ucl.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer: Chiara de Waure
Reviewer's report:

Minor essential concerns

1. Table 1 has not been referenced in the text; furthermore, captions should be checked carefully. By now, there is an asterisk near "65+" which is meaningless if we look at the caption.

Response 1: Table 1 was formerly only referenced on one occasion. All relevant sections are now referenced. The * near 65+ has been removed from Table 1.

2. In results section the information about participants registered with a GP has been reported twice and denominators and, consequently, percentages do not agree ([...]) Nearly three quarters of participants (329/452; 72.79%) .... [...] Almost three quarters (72.31%; 329/455)).

Response 2: This has been corrected and is now stated once as 329/452; 72.79%

3. Authors should report clearly the source of data about eligibility and vaccination coverage at national level. Furthermore, in the comparison between nationwide and homeless data Authors should specify they are not independent being the most of homeless are registered with a GP.


With regard to the comparison between nationwide and homeless data we would argue that given the homeless population constitute less than a fraction of 1% of those registered with GPs the figures are effectively independent so we do not feel adding this statement adds value to the paper unless the editors insist on this.

4. I recommend the Authors refining the conclusion because if, among those aged 16-64, nearly 40% were eligible for influenza vaccination due to clinical risk factors compared with 13% at national level, it means that homeless people are nearly three times likely to be eligible.

Response 4: We have refined the conclusion to reflect this recommendation. ‘Compared to the general population, homeless people aged 16-64 are nearly three times more likely to be eligible for influenza vaccination with nearly 40% having clinical risk factors compared with 13% at national level. Despite this only a quarter of eligible homeless adults aged 16-64 were vaccinated compared to over 50% nationally.’
Reviewer: Helen Ding
Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

5. In the background session, it will be good to list explicitly what the eligibility criteria are for flu vaccination: 16-64 yrs with any of the medical conditions, and age 65 years and over. Please list each of those medical conditions and the age.

Response 6: We have added a table including Ref for the Age and Clinical Risk Categories and amended numbering of other tables.

Table 1: Clinical risk categories (8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All aged 65 years and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic respiratory disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic heart disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic renal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic liver disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic neurological disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunosuppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minor essential revisions

6. Table 1, there is a footnote symbol in 65+ group, however, the actual footnote does not match it. please either remove this symbol or add corresponding footnote;
Response 6: See Response 1

7. in Table 2, for those with sample size less than 30 (8/17, 9/21 etc), please add footnote indicating "the sample size is less than 30 or the 95% CI half width is greater than 10, so the estimate may not reliable";
Response 7: We have added this footnote as recommended

8. Figure 1. it is confusing to read the % of eligibility for 65 yrs+ group, as they are all eligible for flu vaccination. I would recommend either leave this group out for the figure (as you have it in table 2 already) or add a footnote indicating what the denominator is for this group;
Response 8: We have added a footnote indicating the denominator - 4.6% (95% CI: 2.3, 9.1 (21/455)) homeless people surveyed were eligible due to age (65+).

9. As all figures and tables should be self-explanatory, please make it clear what is eligibility criteria are so that readers do not need to go back to the text to find it out.
Response 9: The addition of Table 1: clearly stating the eligibility criteria has addressed this issue.