Author's response to reviews

Title: The study of reproductive outcome and the health of offspring of UK veterans of the Gulf war: methods and description of the study population

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PDF covering letter
Dear Dr Collett

Re: The study of reproductive outcome and the health of offspring of UK veterans of the Gulf war: methods and description of the study population

Thank you for your letter of 3rd December regarding the above paper. We are now submitting a revised manuscript, and present our response to the reviewers’ comments below.

We thank Professor Wessely for his kind comments.
We also thank Professor Cherry for her helpful and constructive comments. We have made the following changes under the points listed in her “compulsory revisions”:

a) “The numbering of the tables in the text does not correspond to the content of the tables.” We have corrected all inconsistencies in this respect.

b) The reference to data within tables is inaccurate. In the example quoted, we were inferring that people were more likely to respond if they were older, an officer and in regular service from the distributions of respondents’ characteristics in the tables. We have now inserted the relevant response rates explicitly into the text and have removed reference to the tables.

c) The first reference to table 7 is before that to table 6. They should be renumbered. This has been done.

d) At a number of places it is difficult to work out the denominators. We have changed the two examples mentioned to make the denominators more explicit. We have had the rest of the text checked in the manner suggested, and found no further ambiguities.

e) Significance levels (p-values) are scattered about the text without specifying exactly what was tested. The statistical tests used in the various situations are detailed in the methods section. We have changed the example mentioned by Professor Cherry to make the test explicit in that instance. With regard to reporting all p-values, we have carefully checked the text for where we present evidence relating to a comparison between the two groups.
We feel that we have quoted p-values appropriately, but that where proportions, or other summary statistics, are almost identical in the two groups being compared the addition of a (highly non-statistically significant) p-value would make the paper unnecessarily cluttered and long.

We hope that you are satisfied with the revised version, and look forward to hearing from you in the near future regarding publication.

Thank you.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely

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