Author's response to reviews

Title: Development and evaluation of a hand held computer based on-call pack for health protection out of hours duty: A pilot study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,
Please find enclosed a revised version of our manuscript "Development and evaluation of a hand held computer based on-call pack for health protection out of hours duty: A pilot study". A list of changes and response to the reviewers comments are summarised below. We have highlighted changes in the paper by using a bold font.

Major essential revision:

All the sources used in the study (p.7) should be cited with website addresses.
"All sources including website addresses now cited in the reference list"

It would be useful to know if there was a formal process of analysis or evaluation of the additional information resources mentioned on p.7 before they were included.
"No formal analysis of information from the Department of Health and Health Protection Agency Websites was carried out because all the documents are accepted national guidelines, while the national electronic library of infections includes evidenced based, quality tagged documents. A sentence has been added in page 7 stating that no formal evaluation of the sources was conducted.

Were there any licencing or copyright issues in creating multiple copies of these resources?
"Use of national guidelines in local on-call documents does not raise copyright issues. However, if wider use of the same pack is planned outside the UK this will be an important issue. Where we obtained information from other sources such as text books, an interpretation of the content rather than a direct copy was used. All software used on the on-call pack were fully licensed versions from the manufacturers."

One major weakness of the project is the "ad-hoc basis" (p.7) by which the information packs are updated. If such a system were to be put into general use for a first tier response, it should be assumed that the resources used were the current versions. Acknowledgement that this is necessary is made on p.12, but there should be a comment that the ad-hoc updating wasn't satisfactory on p.7 to make it quite clear. "A sentence has been added on p.8 stating that it was not satisfactory to update the on call pack on an adhoc basis."

Minor essential revision:

More information on the process of creating the pack would be useful if the project were to be replicated. For example, the choice of software used was mainly for ease of adaptation. However, the process of adaptation might be useful for those who have not worked with PDAs before. No comment was made as to the difference between PDAs and laptops apart from the screen size.
"The process of adaptation is very simple and just entails automatically converting files from a PC based
version such as Microsoft Word document to a pocket PC equivalent. A sentence has been added explaining this on page 6. The difference in content between the PDA and laptop versions of the on call pack is explained further (page 7).

The way in which the electronic version was used could be shown in more detail. For example, the description on p.6 of the index page seems to imply that the view of the electronic version was substantially different from the printed version. It would be useful to take an example and drill down from the index at least one more screen.

"Two further figures illustrating other pages of the on call pack are now shown in figure 2 and 3."

The plural of PDA is PDAs not PDA's (which is possessive.) Correct on page 4, but one escaped on p.8. "Corrected".

Discretionary revision

The Discussion section (pp. 10-13) concentrates on the use of PDAs. It would be interesting to learn whether the users preferred the PDAs to the laptops, or to have some comment from the authors as to the suitability of both types of device for the task, comparing their strengths and weaknesses.

"A paragraph (p.12) has been added to the discussion indicating the opinion of the authors regarding the strengths and weaknesses of either approach. Although most of the comments we have received from users about the PDA on call pack were positive and better than those for the laptop version, a definitive statement about the preference of the users would be inappropriate until wider evaluation of the on call pack has been conducted."

We thank the reviewer for the comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Thank You

Yours sincerely,

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