Author’s response to reviews

Title: Costs of the 'Hartslag Limburg' community heart health intervention

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
REACTION TO REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

Reviewer: Silvie Perreault

Major compulsory revisions

Comment 1
abstract: You should add more details in the methods section regarding the target population, type of intervention and finally costing calculation

reaction to comment 1
We added a few lines to explain more about the target population and the type of intervention (page 2, para 2)

Added text

Methods: Hartslag Limburg was a large-scale community programme that consisted of many interventions to prevent cardiovascular diseases. The target population consisted of all inhabitants of the region (n=180,000). Special attention was paid to reach persons with a low socioeconomic status.

Costs were calculated using the guidelines for economic evaluation in health care. An overview of the material and staffing input involved was drawn up for every single intervention, and volume components were attached to each intervention component. These data were gathered during the implementation of the intervention. Finally, the input was valued, using Dutch price levels for 2004.

Minor essential revisions

Comment 1
Page 5 para 2, line 1,2,3,4: I am wondering of the pertinence of this section

Original text:
In order to reduce the prevalence of CVD in the Netherlands, a large-scale intervention project for cardiovascular diseases, called ‘Hartslag Limburg’, was set up (Hartslag Limburg is Dutch for Limburg Heartbeat; named after the Dutch province of Limburg, where it took place).

Reaction to comment 1
These lines are indeed not relevant in the introduction section, because the method section explains about this. We thus removed these lines

Comment 2
Para 5 the section background: instead of the word 'background' I suggest to use Methods
Thereafter I suggest these changes for the sections in the methods part:
1 target population
2 development of the community programme
3 cost calculation
3.1 identification
3.2 quantification
3.3 valuation
4 statistical analysis

reaction to comment 2:
The suggested changes improve the structure, so we changed the structure to your suggestions. A section 'statistical analysis' was added.
Added text (page 11, para 2):

**Statistical analysis**

The study can be characterized as a descriptive analysis, in which all costs that were made during the community program of Hartslag Limburg were calculated on a detailed level.

Comment 3:
Page 8, para 8: these three phases are discussed…. Is this a useful sentence

Reaction to comment 3
The sentence is indeed not necessary. The sentence is thus deleted

Comment 4
Page 11 para 4, the prices of the material….. You should add a reference

Reaction to comment 4
We agree that adding a reference would be useful. However, it concerned internal financial reports and for this reason, no reference can be provided.

Comment 5
Page 12, para 3, line 11: a sentence never starts with a number

Reaction to comment 5
The sentence was rephrased

Original sentence

€250,000 was spent on improving dietary patterns, and another €45,000 on improving lifestyle in general

Adjusted sentence (page 12, lines 9 and 10)

On improving the dietary pattern €250,000 was spent. Another €45,000 was spent on improving lifestyle in general.

Comment 6
Page 13, para 5: list the three most expensive interventions

Reaction to comment 6:
We added the names of the interventions for clearer reading.

Original text

The three most expensive interventions accounted for 45% of the costs.

Adjusted text (page 13, lines 8 and 9)

The three most expensive interventions - 'Exercise TV', 'Tasty and Healthy' and 'Focus on Heart and Sports' - accounted for 45% of the costs.

Comment 7
Page 15, para 5: you certainly have other disadvantages, such as the generalisability to other countries.

Reaction to comment 7
The external validity is paid special attention to in the present study. It is true however that costs of a community program will never be completely independent of place
We thus added the following text (page 15, para 3):
In spite of the fact that the present study paid more attention to the external validity than previous studies, it must be realized that the costs of community programs will never be completely independent of time and place.

Comment 8
Page 16, para 2, line 1,2,3: is this relevant for the present study?

It concerns the following lines:

The main question that remains is whether spending money on programmes like Hartslag Limburg is useful. This question can only be answered by relating the costs of the programme to its effects.

Reaction to comment 8
We feel that this is relevant information to finish the discussion chapter, because it gives information about the additional value of the cost-calculation.