08 February 2011

Dear Natalie

Re: MS: 1591508727411480
Ambulatory oxygen: why do patients with COPD not use their portable systems as prescribed? A qualitative study
Elizabeth Arnold, Anne Bruton, Maggie Donovan-Hall, Angela Fenwick, Bridget Dibb and Elizabeth Walker

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the second round of reviewers’ comments.

Reviewer 3 requires no additional changes.

Reviewer 2 has not asked for specific changes but has made some negative comments which we would like to refute.

Re the issue of our use of the terms adherence and on-adherence

Unlike long term oxygen therapy (LTOT), currently there are no guidelines for ambulatory oxygen (AO) to determine what adherence to AO should be, in terms of time or hours used (unlike LTOT which is usually deemed to be 15 hours per day). The governing principle behind AO is for it to be used out of the house when walking or exercising, so we have used the terms adherence/non-adherence according to those principles i.e. non-adherence reflects the patient not using the AO outside the house.

Re the issue of new information

We continue to disagree that this study adds little that is new – there is limited qualitative research published in this respiratory field and our methodology has allowed us to elucidate the reasons COPD patients are not using their AO cylinders beyond the obvious ones such as ‘weight’. We are giving health professionals valuable information on other issues such as the importance of carers to carry and manage the equipment, and the issue of stigmatisation and embarrassment. This type of information is essential to support the current policy drive towards establishing community oxygen assessment services in the UK, and the associated practice of reviewing and withdrawing AO from patients who are not using the equipment as intended. Understanding people’s reasons for their medical choices are fundamental to enable the initiation of interventions to promote behaviour change.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Bruton (corresponding author)