Author's response to reviews


Authors:

Elaine Hough (elaine.hough@knowsley.nhs.uk)
Richard Stephenson (r.stephenson@uea.ac.uk)
Louise Swift (L.swift@uea.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews:

1/8/07

Re: MS 9841683291408137


Elaine Hough, Richard Stephenson and Louise Swift

Dear Biomed Central Editorial,

Thank you for providing the reviewers' comments to the above paper and for the opportunity to respond and resubmit a revised version. We have found the comments most helpful in developing the paper and hope that we have addressed the concerns and responded to the advice appropriately. We note the following areas for address:

Major Revisions:

1. The convenience sample and attrition rate may have potential influences on the results.

We have substantially revised the paper and believe the discussion now incorporates a wider consideration of these potentially influencing factors. The attrition rate had been addressed but this is reconsidered.

2. The Background section and discussion could both be revised to ensure other trials (e.g., UK BEAM trial) are included as appropriate, although the background section could benefit from reduction.

The re-write has addressed these issues, including further literature review which has included the BEAM trial. The background has been reduced and greater focus given to the discussion with regard to the limitations of the pilot study and inferences drawn.
3. The statistical analysis should be reconsidered either to reduce the number of tests or to adjust the significance level.

We have revisited the statistical analysis and have tempered the aims of the study and the inference drawn from any analysis of such small numbers. However, we also note that whilst there are a number of tests utilised these are specifically employed against the main aims of the study. The aim of this paper (albeit on data drawn from a small scale pilot study) is to compare the AR and MT outcomes and investigate whether the difference depends on psychosocial factors. The comparison is made using three measures which are each tested and reported in table 1. The possibility of an interaction is also tested and a further test of significance is reported, but is not significant. These are the main results and are reported in the abstract. The remaining statistical tests are either (i) comparisons at baseline or (ii) to repeat the primary investigation but allowing for possible confounders. We have clarified the purpose of these tests within the text and believe this to be explicit to the reader.

To further clarify the issue we have checked that the main aims of the study are emphasized and amended the wording concerning the significance level to, 'a significance level of 0.05 was used for each test'.

4. In keeping with the above, it is recommended that the study aims and discussion need to be tempered in light of this as a pilot (what can reasonably be drawn from the results given the limitations of the data).

We believe the amendment to the aims of the paper and the revised discussion which expresses the potentially interesting trends in the data with caution have addressed these concerns. We have attempted to strike a greater balance in identifying potential themes that support the development of this pilot into a full trial (the primary reason for analysis here) and the inference of any absolute significant value from the limited data set.

5. The abstract should be revised to include essential data and a Consort diagram would enhance the methods section.

These revisions have been carried out in full.

Minor essential revisions:

1. The claim that pragmatism is acceptable in this trail but the same approach is criticised in other trials needs to be addressed for consistency.

The revisions to the background have addressed this.

Minor discretionary revisions:

We have accepted this advice in full and have addressed the specific discretionary points in full.

We hope that the manuscript will now be acceptable for publication and would hope to hear from you at your earliest opportunity. It would be helpful to us to know your expected time scale in considering the revised manuscript.
Yours faithfully,
Elaine Hough