Author's response to reviews

Title: Survey and online discussion groups to develop a patient-rated outcome measure on acceptability of treatment response in vitiligo

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Miss Ladag and Miss Partridge

Thank you for sending us the peer review comments on our manuscript.

We are glad that one reviewer was happy with the manuscript without revisions, and we are happy to respond to the other peer review comments below:

**Responses to Peer Review comments**

Reviewer: Anthony Ormerod

Minor essential revisions

Comment:
In methods for the survey you refer to using previous participants in priority setting. The word participant may be politically correct but it is not clear then that these are patients rather than health care professionals whose views you would not want to contaminate this patient centred focus. Please make explicit that individuals with vitiligo or their representative or guardian - Carer could be their doctor and misconstrued.

Response:
Thank you for pointing this out; it is true that the term ‘participants’ is used twice, to refer to those who were part of the Priority Setting Partnership and those who completed the Survey mentioned in this paper. The section now has been altered to ensure that it is clear that doctors and healthcare professionals were not part of the participant group:

“Participants in the survey included both those who had sought treatment for their vitiligo and those who had not, and included parents/guardians of children with vitiligo as well as those with vitiligo themselves. We did not include clinicians and healthcare professionals who had participated in the previous Priority Setting Partnership”.

Comment:
Table 5 was confusing to me even when looking at the images. I think it would be much clearer to tabulate the cumulative percent in each column eg it seems only a small number found complete repigmentation was satisfactory.

Response:
Thank you; we agree this could be made clearer. The cumulative percentages have now been used in this table.

Comment:
Discretionary revision. This is qualitative data and this reviewer found the quotations in italics tangible but one quote doesn’t encapsulate the whole data set and may be giving just one example is not going to be truly representative. The tables summarise the data nicely and these quotes were to the reviewer unnecessary. Opinions could differ and others might like this.
Response:
Thank you for your comments. We agree that a few quotes are unable to capture the whole data set in its entirety. However, to allow readers to get a sense of some of what was said, we feel that the quotes are helpful, and they can also be helpful in clarifying what the more quantitative data are saying. Therefore, we hope that they can be included in the manuscript. However, we are happy for the editorial team to remove them if they feel it is necessary.

Reviewer: Feroze Kaliyadan

Comment:
Discretionary Revision: Could clarify in a bit more detail regarding the sample size calculation and how exactly the primary survey was designed.

Response:
To clarify sample size, we have now edited this section of the article and it reads:

“The sample size for this study was dictated by the time and resources available. However, we aimed to include at least 100 participants in the survey (assuming a confidence interval of 95%, and an accuracy rate or +/- 10%), and 18 - 20 participants in the discussion groups, in order to gather a broad selection of views.”

With respect to the survey design, we presume that the reviewer is asking about whether or not the survey was piloted.
We have added the following to the Methods section to clarify this process:

Prior to distribution, we piloted it by asking a group of clinicians, researchers and members of the Centre of Evidence-Based Dermatology (CEBD) Patient Panel to review the survey and comment on the relevance of the survey content and how easy it was to understand and complete.

Comment:
Discretionary Revision
Also a bit curious if the quality of life could have been incorporated in a more significant way into the survey. Maybe you could elaborate a bit more on this in the discussion session.

Response:
The reviewer is absolutely correct in pointing out that vitiligo has a considerable impact on quality of life. However, there is already and extensive literature on this subject, and there are validated vitiligo-specific quality of life scales available for assessing this. The work we have reported in the manuscript is the first stage of developing a patient-rated outcome measure to assess the acceptability of treatment response (in other words, more to do with the patient’s view on how the vitiligo looks after treatment). Once fully validated, this outcome measure can be used in parallel with the vitiligo-specific quality of life scales that are also available, to assess both
the visual and psychological aspects of treatment ‘success’ from the patient’s perspective.

We have added the following to the discussion section (under Strengths and Limitations of the research):

“In this work, we did not explore participants’ views on the impact of vitiligo on their quality of life. There is already an extensive literature on this subject, and there are validated vitiligo-specific quality of life scales available for assessing this [19]. Once fully validated, the outcome measure we are developing can be used in parallel with vitiligo-specific quality of life scales, to assess both the visual and psychological aspects of treatment ‘success’ from the patient’s perspective.”

Response to Editorial comments:

Comment:
RATS guidelines
We strongly encourage our authors to adhere to the appropriate reporting guidelines and ask that you adhere to the RATS guidelines (http://www.biomedcentral.com/authors/rats) as much as possible and include a completed checklist as an attached file.

Response:
We have completed the RATS checklist as requested, and made some additions to the manuscript accordingly.

Comment:
Thank you for providing some information regarding the origin of the image in figure 1. We would be grateful if you could expand on this to clarify what constitutes the “public domain” in this case. Please be aware images taken from the internet to be published in an article at BioMed Central need to have been chosen with the correct usage rights, i.e. free to use and modify even commercially.

Response:
Although we are confident that there are no copyright or usage issues with the image we used (as it can be found on several different websites with no specific acknowledgement of its source or permissions), we have decided to remove the image from the manuscript to avoid any possible problems that could be caused by including it (and also because the manuscript is already quite long and has a lot of additional tables).
In place of showing the image, we have made the following amendment to the Methods section to explain how we used it in the survey:

“Participants were also asked to look at a series of images featuring a young boy with dark skin with a vitiliginous lesion. Using image manipulation software (Adobe® Photoshop® CS2, Adobe Systems Incorporated; San Jose, California, USA) the lesion was gradually reduced in the sequential images to simulate repigmentation at different percentages. Participants were asked to indicate the degree of repigmentation that they considered worthwhile after 9 months of treatment, followed by the minimum level of repigmentation they would be prepared to accept.”
We have amended figure references in the manuscript accordingly.