Author's response to reviews

Title: A randomised controlled trial to explore attitudes to routine scale and polish and compare manual versus ultrasonic scaling in the general dental service in Scotland ISRCTN99609795

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A randomised controlled trial to explore attitudes to routine scale and polish and compare manual versus ultrasonic scaling in the general dental service in Scotland  

The BioMed Central Editorial Team,

Thank you for your e-mail in connection with the review by Dr Luiz A Pimenta of the above paper. We welcome the opportunity to clarify the points raised and, as a consequence, the paper has been re-worked and re-submitted with additions and modifications.

There are two areas where additions have been made in line with Dr Pimenta’s comments, one in the Methods section and one in the Discussion. The additions are highlighted below.

Method / Participants (page 5)

All adult patients who were dentate, generally fit and well, attending for a routine check-up appointment, and who, in the VDP’s clinical opinion, required a simple scale and polish were eligible for inclusion in the study. This treatment is defined as: ‘non-surgical treatment involving scaling, polishing, and simple periodontal treatment including oral hygiene instruction, requiring only one visit’. A patient’s eligibility was determined only after examination by the VDP.

Discussion (page 13)

In the UK, dental care is provide either privately or within the National Health Service at a fixed cost that includes a patient contribution of 80% (up to a maximum charge for a course of treatment). Around 49% of the population are registered with an NHS dentist at any one time [4] but, as registration lapses if a visit is not made within 15 months, a greater proportion of the population is believed to receive care within the NHS dental service than this figure might suggest. Although the number of dental treatments provided outside the NHS scheme is increasing in the UK in general, in Scotland an estimated 81% of treatments are currently provided under the NHS system [5] and it is likely that the majority of the population will continue to seek NHS dental care. All the patient participants in this study were receiving a scale and polish under the NHS system, for which a charge of £8.08 was in place at the time of the study.

Although the majority of patients were unaware of the price paid for individual items of service, many patients did seem to be aware of the approximate cost of their treatment, with 49% of the subjects suggesting either £8 or £10…. 
The following modifications have been made:

**Abstract:** dental vocational practitioners changed to vocational dental practitioners

**Methods:** GPVT changed to GDPVT (for general dental practice vocational training) and definition moved to previous paragraph as already mentioned.

Additional points:

We can confirm that the age range of patients quoted (16-80) is correct, although there were only a few patients at the extremes of the age range.

The reason for the involvement of only 28 VDPs is because this is the total number in the Eastern region of Scotland were the study took place.

Although the terms dental vocational training (DVT) and vocational dental practitioner (VDP) clash in terms of word order, these are the terms used in the British dental establishment.

I hope that these points are covered satisfactorily but would, of course, be happy to make any further clarifications considered necessary. Thank you for your attention to this paper.

Yours faithfully,

Brian C. Bonner