Author's response to reviews

Title: A randomised controlled trial of a smoking cessation intervention delivered by dental hygienists: a feasibility study

Authors:

Vivian I Binnie (v.binnie@dental.gla.ac.uk)
Siobhan McHugh (s.mchugh@dental.gla.ac.uk)
William Jenkins (william.jenkins@northglasgow.nhs.net)
William Borland (bill.borland.wg@northglasgow.scot.nhs.uk)
Lorna M Macpherson (l.macpherson@dental.gla.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 13 February 2007

Author's response to reviews:

Claudia Browning,
Assistant Editor,
BMC-series journals.

12 February 2007

Dear Claudia

Re Manuscript: MS 1856837464124602:

A randomised controlled trial of a smoking cessation intervention delivered by dental hygienists: a feasibility study

I attach the modified manuscript, as requested by your email of 19th January, 2007.

I confirm that the Trial Registration is complete and the appropriate trial number has been added to the abstract.

Reviewer 1: Prof Peter Heasman

Minor essential revisions

a) "RCT" has been changed to "randomised controlled trial" in the title.
b) In Figure 1, the "%age validated quitter" has been changed to the number of validated quitters with the percentages appearing in parentheses.

c) Tables 2 and 3 have been aggregated.

Reviewer 2: Dr Judith Gordon

Major compulsory revisions

a) Dr Gordon requests repeated point prevalence measures to be added. These measures have been added to the text for 6 months (p.8, para 4) and one year (p.9, para 3).

b) Comment was made, with respect to its limitations, that this intervention was not generalisable to general dentistry. The following sentence has been added on p.12, para. 2.

'This intervention was delivered in a specialised secondary care setting and its findings may not be generalisable to primary care.'

The following text with regards to the median number of visits and success rates has been added (p.11, para 2). A reference has also been added to substantiate the last point.

'The median number of visits at 6 months was 6-7, higher than one would expect in other dental settings such as primary care. Therefore, a success rate of 10% (point prevalence) is modest, verging on disappointing for the relative amount of time invested. Of the participants 50% were from the more deprived areas, as measured by DEPCAT, and it is known that the success rate is lower with individuals from more deprived backgrounds'.

c) There was a request that reference to a paper by Severson et al., 1998 (of whom Dr Gordon is a co-author), is not used to compare against the current study and therefore the relevant paragraph (version 1, page 12, starting line 12) has been removed.

d) Text with reference to the method of randomisation, i.e. randomisation by practice, v randomisation by practitioner, has been added (p.10, para 2). The effect that this system of randomisation may have had on the quit rate is also acknowledged.

'In this trial, the system of randomisation used was by practitioner, with each study hygienist delivering both intervention and control care. This may have led to contamination, resulting in a higher than expected quit rate in the control group. In a definitive multicentred study, a cleaner study design would be to randomise by practice, rather than practitioner.'
Within this study, this would have been impracticable due to the fact that there were 3 hygienists involved, who work side-by-side within the same clinical area. It was also felt that to control for intra-hygienist variability, to have each staff member deliver both intervention and control would attempt to balance this. However the authors acknowledge that, given the need for a large multicentred study, randomisation by practice would result in a cleaner design.

Minor Essential Revisions

e)

No list of typographical errors was attached, and the script has been further proof read. English spelling is used rather than American (customise, randomise etc).

Reference was made to the standard of English in the discussion. There were eleven paragraphs in the discussion (v.1). Two paragraphs commenced 'With respect to.....' and one 'With regards to....'. This has been modified, leaving only para 2 commencing, 'With respect to...'.

There was also a request to formalise the manuscript with regards to formatting, and I have endeavoured to do this, following the template available on the BMC website. Paragraph headings have been changed (font, size) to conform with these standards. References have also been formatted in line with recommendations.

The abstract has also been restructured according to the recommended layout.

With regards to informed consent, the following line has been added: (p.4, para 1, line 7).

'Informed consent was obtained from the patients prior to participation in the trial.'

I hope that these changes meet with you and the reviewers' satisfaction, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Viv Binnie, BDS, MPH, PhD

Lecturer

Glasgow Dental School