Author's response to reviews

Title: Women's perceptions and reasons for choosing the pill, patch, or ring in the CHOICE study: a cross-sectional survey of contraceptive method selection after counseling

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Women’s perceptions and reasons for choosing the pill, patch, or ring in the CHOICE study: a cross-sectional survey of contraceptive method selection after counseling

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General comments from authors: We would like to thank the reviewers for taking the time to review our manuscript. Please find below a step-by-step account of how the reviewers’ comments have been addressed in the revised manuscript. Please note that all changes in the manuscript are indicated using the ‘track changes’ feature in Word; page numbers indicating the respective location of change in the revised manuscript draft are also provided.

Reviewer's report 1

Title: The CHOICE study: women’s perceptions and reasons for choosing the pill, patch or ring
Version: 2 Date: 19 November 2012
Reviewer: Lete i Ignacio
Reviewer’s report:
I have already reviewed several papers related to the CHOICE Project. The CHOICE Project is well known for me. Concerning this paper, there are not objections to be published: the methodology is well explained, the results are well presented and the conclusions are adequate. The only concern I have is about the iterative publications based in the same study, but this is an Editor business. There are more than 5 papers published based in those study.

Authors’ response: An extensive description of how this manuscript is different from the previously published reports of the CHOICE study has been added to the Introduction of this manuscript (see page 6 of the revised manuscript).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:
I do not have any conflict of interest
Reviewer's report 2

Title: The CHOICE study: women's perceptions and reasons for choosing the pill, patch or ring

Version: 2 Date: 13 December 2012
Reviewer: Rebecca Say

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions
1. They should include the study design (i.e. cross-sectional survey) in the title.

Authors' response: The title has been revised, as requested.

2. The aim of the paper should be made clearer by re-writing the final paragraph of the introduction.

Authors' response: The final paragraph of the Introduction has been re-written to clarify the aim of this paper, as requested (see page 6).

3. The authors should include information about how they developed, validated and piloted the questionnaire.

Authors' response: A detailed additional section has been added to the Methods section outlining how the questionnaires used in the CHOICE study were developed, validated and piloted (see pages 7-8).

4. The authors need to clarify how women’s interest in using a CHC was ascertained and provide more information about how eligible women were identified.

Authors' response: Additional detail has been added on how eligible women were selected for inclusion in this study (see page 8).

5. It is unclear how data regarding confounding factors was obtained. Were they also collected in the questionnaire? The authors need to explain this and what instruments were used.

Authors' response: All data were collected by means of the study questionnaires. An additional statement ('The data about these potential confounders were taken from the HCP questionnaire and Part B of the per-subject questionnaire') has been added to the manuscript to make this clear (see bottom of page 9).

6. Descriptive data should be included. For example, the authors state that there was considerable variation in demographic variables between countries but do not include the data. This should be included as should data on previous
contraceptive use which is also referred to.

**Authors’ response:** An additional table (Table 1 in the revised manuscript draft) providing an overview of demographic characteristics and previous contraceptive use by country has been added to the manuscript to address this point.

7. Missing data should also be summarised.

**Authors’ response:** Details on missing data have been added to Tables 1-5.

8. Data should be summarised for each country, particularly as comparing between countries was an aim of this paper. On pages 11 and 12 numerical data should be included in relation to the most common reasons given for each country.

**Authors’ response:** Additional tables for the most frequent reasons to select and not to select the methods by country have been added to the manuscript, as supplementary tables. Final discretion on whether to use them as supplementary or core tables is deferred to the Editor.

9. In all the tables numerical data should be included as well as the percentages.

**Authors’ response:** Numerical data have been added to all tables in the revised manuscript draft, as requested.

10. The authors state that knowledge of contraceptive methods appeared to be a ‘major relevant factor’ but data on prior knowledge does not appear to have been collected. If it has this data should be summarised in the results or this should be removed.

**Authors’ response:** The statement has been revised, so that it reads: ‘Knowledge of contraceptive methods obtained as a result of counseling appeared to be a major relevant factor’ (see page 16, Discussion section, first line of third paragraph).

11. The authors’ assumption that women retain more knowledge about the method they selected is not evidence-based. This should be removed or supporting data provided.

**Authors’ response:** The words ‘…..especially if one assumes that women retain more knowledge about the method they selected than about those they did not select’ on page 17 have been deleted.

12. Generalisability should be addressed in the discussion. As women considering other methods of contraception were also excluded I am unsure how
valid the study findings are as many women will want to at least consider other methods, particularly long acting reversible methods, in order to make an informed choice.

Authors’ response: Generalisability is now discussed in the Conclusions, on page 20, first paragraph.

13. The authors should not conclude that providing structured information effects decision making as there was no control group.

Authors’ response: The sentence ‘Providing structured information about alternative methods to the pill has an effect on a woman’s decision-making process’ has been deleted (page 21, lines 1-2).

14. Limitations to the questionnaire should be considered.

Authors’ response: A discussion of the limitations of the questionnaire has been added to page 20 of the manuscript to address this point.

15. The authors should comment on the ethics of not informing women about these alternative methods. They suggest that including them would have made counselling ‘too extensive and complicated’ but counselling about all options is good practice (and essential to ensure women could make an informed choice) and leaflets which cover all the options are available (and commonly used in the UK).

Authors’ response: This section has been revised to make the rationale for limiting this study to combined hormonal contraceptive methods clearer (see top of page 20).

16. It should be made clear if Merck, Sharp and Dohme had any role in the design of the study.

Authors’ response: The role of Merck, Sharp and Dohme has been clarified in the first paragraph of the Methods section (page 7), as requested.

17. The authors should adhere to the STROBE guidelines when re-drafting the manuscript.

Authors’ response: The STROBE guidelines have been consulted for the revision of the manuscript.

Discretionary Revisions
1. They should also include the questionnaire as an appendix to the study to enable readers to evaluate it (major compulsory).
Authors’ response: The questionnaires and counseling leaflet can be made available for publication as appendices on request.

2. It would have been useful to include a qualitative component in the study to explore women’s attitudes and preferences in-depth. Depending on how the authors developed the questionnaire they may need to address this in the limitations of the study (discretionary).

Authors’ response: This study assessed women’s perceptions and preferences by questionnaire. A discussion of the limitations of the questionnaire has been added to page 20 of the manuscript, as mentioned above. An in-depth assessment would have required interviews which was beyond the scope of the study.

3. It would also have been useful to include the counselling leaflet as an appendix to enable readers to evaluate it (discretionary).

Authors’ response: As stated above, the questionnaires and counseling leaflet can be made available for publication on request.

4. It would have been useful to include a participant flow diagram and to describe how many participants were eligible (and how many were excluded because they wanted to consider other methods), recruited and completed the questionnaire.

Authors’ response: Results from the log of all women who consulted their healthcare professional for contraceptive advice during the study period are now included in the Results section (see first paragraph on page 11).

5. The authors state that health professionals value particular characteristics of CHCs but do not reference these.

Authors’ response: This paragraph has been deleted (see top of page 18).

6. The results suggest that counselling being evaluated may have been unsatisfactory because of some of the beliefs women reported (for example, perceiving that the methods would differ in relation to regular menstrual bleeding) and they should comment on this.

Authors’ response: Ease of use and monthly/weekly vs daily administration was much more important for the women in our study than differences in menstrual bleeding regularity.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.