Author's response to reviews

Title: Family Physicians’ Perceptions of Academic Detailing: a quantitative and qualitative study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
April 20, 2007

Dear Dr da-Silva:

**RE: Family Physicians’ Perceptions of Academic Detailing: a quantitative and qualitative study (MS: 1767043656121233)**

We thank the reviewers for their helpful comments. Below is a summary of changes made and our responses to the reviewers:

1. **Low response rate and skewed responses** - Two reviewers commented on the low response rate, particularly for the non-users group, and indicated that we needed to comment on this limitation in our discussion.
   This was already mentioned as a limitation. However, in response to the two reviewers’ comments, we have added a paragraph in the discussion (page 21) to describe this limitation in more detail.

2. **Perceptions may not reflect reality**
   As Dr Shattner indicated, a limitation of this type of study is that we cannot definitively determine if the views expressed by the physicians in the interviews and questionnaires are real versus perceived. This would be the case with any study that uses subjective measures such as questionnaires and interviews. We have added 3 sentences to our discussion (page 22) to indicate that this is a limitation of our study.

3. **Interviewer as a potential bias**
   The interviewer was a research assistant at the Dalhousie Office of Continuing Medical Education. This is the office that runs the academic detailing program. The interviewees were informed that the research assistant was affiliated with this office, but that she was not involved with the academic detailing service in any way. Also, the interviewees were informed that all of their responses would be anonymous and confidential. Neither the research team nor the academic detailing employees had access to any identifying information of the participants. They had access to only the anonymous transcripts. Although these factors were explained to participants, there is still a chance that some people felt uncomfortable sharing their feelings about and experiences with the academic detailing service to the interviewer. This possibility is now mentioned as a potential bias in the discussion (page 22).

4. **Improve description of methods** – it would be helpful if the exact interview questions were given in order to provide sufficient information to replicate the work.
   We have added the interview questions as “Additional File 1”

5. **Use of a pragmatic rather than a theoretical approach**
   The reviewer is correct in saying we chose a pragmatic rather than a theoretical approach. We did have assistance with design of the questionnaire from two colleagues (mentioned in acknowledgements) who have a strong background in educational theory and questionnaire design. We met many times to revise the questionnaire before deciding on the final version.
We did not explicitly decide not to adopt a theoretical approach, but my experience is that adopting such an approach does not necessarily lead to a better questionnaire. After all, who is to say that the theory chosen is the most appropriate for the circumstances? We could, for example, have adopted the PRECEDE model or the Transtheoretical Model, but I am not convinced that this would have led to a questionnaire that addressed more important factors than the ones we chose. It is worth noting that we found no other publications addressing our questions and so ours may be the first such study published. We do not propose that our study gives the definitive answers to these questions but hope it provides information for others to build on. They may use our work to adopt a more theoretical approach. We have, however, provided some details on development of the questionnaire (page 6 and 7).

6. **Selection of determinants**
One reviewer indicated that she would like to see the selection of determinants explained. We have added a paragraph to the method section indicating that the questions were developed based on the researchers’ experience with academic detailing and from informal discussion with physicians (page 7). Also, four physicians from each study group tested the questionnaire for face validity.

7. **Format manuscript according to journal style**
As requested, we have ensured that the manuscript conforms to the journal style as outlined at: [http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/ifora/medicine_journals](http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/ifora/medicine_journals).

We have also added the name of the study funder to the acknowledgements.

Please contact me at +1-902-494-2173 or michael.allen@dal.ca if you have any questions.

Thanks again to the reviewers for their comments.

Sincerely,

Michael Allen
Director Special Projects