Author's response to reviews

Title: What impact do posters have on academic knowledge transfer? A pilot survey on author attitudes and experiences

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‘What impact do posters have on academic knowledge transfer? A pilot survey on author attitudes and experiences’

Dear Anastasios,

We thank you for your comments and that of the reviewers for our above titled manuscript.

We believe strongly that our manuscript warrants publication in BMC Medical Education. This is the first study to gather empirical data on author attitudes and experiences with presenting academic posters. We realise the potential methodological limitations associated with our study, but have explicitly stated its focus in gathering pilot data on this new topic. We believe that the data reported in our manuscript will provide the pilot data (both qualitative and quantitative) on which to base future large scale research on the topic across a broad range of academic disciplines.

As requested, we have read through the comments and provide our responses to their queries over the following pages. Please let us know if you require any further information from us. We look forward to your future correspondence.

Kind Regards,

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Reviewer #1: P Smith

1. **The paper, particularly the introduction will need to be much shorter (and maybe better presented as a letter)**
   We have amended the introduction as requested, and placed further emphasis on the discussion of the results further in the manuscript.

2. **The survey response is low, and the sample size is small. Although this is often the case with surveys, the authors had the opportunity here to remind and persuade delegates to complete the surveys (unlike a postal survey) and so the response rate is disappointing.**
   We agree that the response rate is disappointing. We followed methods to increase response rate, as outlined in a recent Cochrane systematic review. We have included this information in the revised methods section (page 8).

3. **There is no proper statistical analysis of the data presented.**
   The data has been presented descriptively. Given that the study was designed as a pilot survey, and with the relatively small data set, we believe that it would not be appropriate to perform modelling or analysis of such data. We additionally included qualitative data to further contextualise the quantitative data i.e. why did only 30% of delegates follow up on their discussion with the author of a particular poster after the event.

4. **There is no indication as to the generalisability of these data, i.e. how delegates at these two Bournemouth conferences would compare to other scientific meetings.**
   We have commented on the generalisability of the data in the revised discussion section (page 16).

5. **There is no mention of how much or little time people spend viewing posters.**
   Delegates at both conferences spent three 30 minute sessions to view the posters and interact with the respective authors. We have included this information in the methods section. Delegates also had the option of viewing the posters over lunch; however the authors were not present during this time period. We have incorporated this information into the methods section (page 7).

6. **The authors may be helped by a previous study on the assessment of academic posters: Scoring posters at scientific meetings: first impressions count. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine 2004;97:340–341.**
   We have incorporated aspects of this study into the introduction and discussion of our manuscript (page 13).

7. **Some discussion on the misuse of posters would have been useful, e.g. how most major conferences generate revenue by accepting all abstracts, and how certain authors or industry use and cite published abstracts as publications, even though there is no peer review and acceptance is almost guaranteed.**
   We have amended the discussion to reference the issues raised by the reviewer in this point (page 13).
Reviewer #2: P Halligan
The question posed by the authors is well defined, clear and appropriate for the selected methodology. The methods appropriate and well described and appropriate and adequately described. The data is considered sound and well presented. However, many of the sources are older than five years. The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. The section requiring more work is the discussion aspect. Some of the word count used in the background could have used in this section. Conclusions are appropriate and the limitations of the work are clearly stated. The authors do clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished. The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found and the writing standard is acceptable.

We have amended the introduction, to facilitate further discussion of the results as suggested.
Reviewer #3: N Sanossian

1. This paper should include information about the demographics of the survey respondents. For example all respondents may have been students, or alternatively all may have been industry representatives.

   All respondents were academics attending two research & enterprise developmental conferences in successive years. The conferences were multi-disciplinary although the professional and academic level of attendee was representative of that to be seen at specific healthcare conferences. We have included this information in the methods section (pages 7-8).

2. Why was this particular meeting chosen? Is this a relatively important academic meeting? Please provide more information about the meeting to better put the results in context.

   These meetings were selected as representative of a multi-discipline conference which utilised poster presentations within its structure. Delegates had undergone a year-long development programme to further their potential for research participation within their academic fields. We have included this point in the methods section to further contextualise the data (page 7).

3. Were those in attendance from many countries; was this meeting a regional meeting or international?

   This was a regional based conference, as such the majority of attendees were from the UK. We have included this information in the amended methods section (page 7).

4. The introduction is too long and should not get into lengthy discussion. This can be addressed in the discussion section. The introduction should give some context to the research question.

   We have re-structured the introduction and discussion sections of the manuscript as suggested.

5. The Methods section is very short, there is not enough information about the meeting, the audience, the goals of the meeting, the number of attendees.

   We have provided further information, as requested, in the methods section (pages 7-8).

6. Only 34 surveys were returned. Why were only 87 passed out over two meetings. Is this because there were only a few attendees? How were the surveys passed out, in what situation and to whom. How were potential participants identified. Was this done randomly? Was every participant approached?

   A total of 87 posters were presented at the two meetings. Each of the authors was sent an email requesting them to participate in an online survey as part of this study. Details of the survey, along with follow-up strategies, and the implementation of the survey are described in the revised methods section (pages 7-8).