Author's response to reviews

Title: Are decision trees a feasible knowledge representation to guide extraction of critical information from randomized controlled trial reports?

Authors:

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Version: 3 Date: 7 September 2008

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We would like to thank the reviewers for their second round of useful comments and are delighted with your decision for in principle acceptance. We have modified our paper in order to address the recommendations proposed by the two reviewers. Attached in this document is an explanation of the modification point-by-point corresponding to each reviewer’s feedback.

Kind regards,

Enrico Coiera MB BS PhD
Grace Chung, Ph.D.
**Comments for Reviewers**

**Reviewer: Jian-Yun Nie**

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
None

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
It would make the paper more interesting if the authors can add some discussion about the feasibility to identify PICO elements and to build decision trees automatically. If we try to do it automatically, what would be the main challenges?

Response: We agree this is a very interesting next stage of our work. We hope that the paper is clearly about testing the feasibility of building decision trees automatically. We have focused on the first crucial stage – identifiability of key elements needed for the decision trees, in principle. The next stage of our program is to report on the efforts to automatically identify such elements, and then the effort required in moving from identification to assembly, and we would prefer to leave these complex issues to follow up papers, as they are not trivial and would lead to a substantial extension of an already lengthy paper.

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**Reviewer: Nancy Wilczynski**

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
First sentence on page 22 should be changed to “Most abstracts found in the retrieval of citations after a search in the Medline database using the publication type randomized controlled trial were primary reports….”

The final sentence on page 22 should include the word “to” after “need”.

Response: We have made these changes as suggested.
Reviewer Carol Friedman

No further review provided.