Author’s response to reviews

Title: Comparison of breast and bowel cancer screening uptake patterns in a common cohort of South Asian women in England

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor

Please find enclosed our final revised manuscript ‘MS: 1286118942267092 - Comparison of breast and bowel cancer screening uptake patterns in a common cohort of South Asian women in England’.

As discussed with your colleague Scott Edmunds, the single reviewer who has continued to comment on this manuscript has essentially missed the focus of the research reported here, although we do of course thank him for his comments.

We have now made some further changes to the Background and Discussion sections of the paper to clearly emphasise the focus of our research i.e. the impact of ethnicity on cancer screening uptake patterns.

The paper does not aim to discuss the potential harms of screening (the topic of the reviewer’s PhD thesis) or the costs and benefits of screening (as requested in his latest response).

UK policy advocates a national population screening programme for breast and bowel cancer and, in the case of breast screening, has done so since 1988. Our aim is therefore not to engage in a debate about whether individuals should undergo such screening, but to investigate equity in these two established population screening programmes.

With regard to the specific request for us to report absolute risk reduction (ARR) figures for breast and bowel screening, this would only be directly relevant if figures were available for different ethnic minority populations in the UK – they are not. However, we do now allude to this fact in the Discussion section, which should hopefully address this point.

We realise that this reviewer is enthusiastic about questioning the value of cancer screening per se but this is not the topic of our manuscript. We look forward to a publication from him on this topic in due course, based on his own research.

We hope this letter clarifies the situation and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

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