Author's response to reviews

Title: Applying an extended theoretical framework for data collection mode to health services research

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor

Thank you for the opportunity to further revise our manuscript in light of the additional comments from the three reviewers. I am pleased to say that we have addressed each of the points raised in this revision. Our specific response to each reviewer is described below.

We trust that this revision is now acceptable to the journal in its revised form and look forward to receiving your response. We once again thank the reviewers for their contribution in advising the revision of this work.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Robling

Response to reviewer’s comments:

Reviewer 1

1. I am very happy with the revised version of this manuscript and feel that the authors have thoroughly addressed the issues that I previously raised. There are only a couple of minor edits that I suggest. The first is in relation to the reference to the paper by Chittleborough et al on p32. I would reword this to read that they “… found differences by education, employment status and occupation amongst those responding…”.

Thank you for these general comments. We have made this suggested wording revision
2. Background, first paragraph, last sentence should read “…but also to the way it is delivered and responded to…”.
Suggested wording change made

3. Background, p7, last sentence of top paragraph should read “…the nature of the response provided by respondents…”
Suggested wording change made

4. Discussion, p8, second-to-last sentence of top paragraph should read “…compared to traditional data collection methods such as paper-based…”
Suggested wording change made

5. IRT should be defined at first use on bottom of page 8.
This initial reference has now been made

6. Reference 71, Roberts, needs details of publisher, or internet details if report not published.
These details have been added

7. Reference 73, Chittleborough et al. is volume 8, page 54. “2008, 8:54”.
This amendment has been made

Reviewer 2

1) the new text in places still requires a little editing here and there - e.g. page 5, last sentence of para 1;
page 6, middle of main para (Tourangeau 'and colleagues')
page 8, end of para 1 ('data collection' methods)
page 9, middle of para 2 - references to Tourangeau and Groves should be inverted (9,7)
page 18, check sentence starting 'Interview pace has been…'
page 24, 4 line of para 1 - delete 'and' after health status
page 30, para 2 - check ‘improving process of care but less…'
page 30, para 3 - check sentence starting 'Perceived benefits…'
page 31, para 1 - check sentence starting 'Computerised data collection…'
All of these minor changes / corrections made

2) on page 26, para 2, I'm slightly confused by the example and how it relates to made - can you make this clearer? At the moment it is not surprising to me that you might have different reports of sexual activity on some of these variables. What is missing is how mode differentially affects respondents in different groups.
The specific mode comparison involved has now been described
3) on page 30, end of para 1, at the moment the text implies that the problem of mode effects is in fact secondary to the problems of overcoming ethical and logistical considerations...which it may be, but this in my mind, slightly undermines the purpose of the article. I wonder whether a concluding sentence to this section would be helpful to spell out the implication that researchers may have to explicitly trade off the problems associated with mode feature effects against the constraints on mode choice.

An additional sentence to this effect has now been added to make this point.

4) A message that I feel could be made more clearly in the overall conclusions to the article is that mode feature effects only really become problematic when researchers (or others) try to make comparisons across data collected in different modes - either from different studies, or from different sample members in the same study. I wonder whether this point can be highlighted - perhaps in the new 'Key messages' box?

We have now added a final bullet point to this box along these lines.

Reviewer 3

1. Page 24, para 1. It might be helpful to the reader if it was stated that the review by Cote et al was not within the field of health.

We have now clarified the source of the papers that contributed to the study by Cote and Buckley.

2. The authors use the term patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) later on in the article (p 30). Perhaps it would be better to use this earlier with examples (health status and quality of life) since it has become a widely used term within health-related research.

We have now introduced this term earlier in the manuscript.

3. p 28, para 1. The fourth sentence could be improved, for example "Data collection as part of randomised trials of therapeutic interventions often includes patient reported outcome measures. How antecedent features in trials - in...".

We have modified the sentence as suggested.

Table 2. insert "the" before "researcher" in the second column.

We have added this word.