Author's response to reviews

Title: "It's easier in pharmacy": why some patients prefer to pay for flu jabs rather than use the National Health Service

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Author's response to reviews: see over
How we have responded to reviewer comments

We thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and have revised the paper accordingly see our responses in italics

Reviewer 1

A. Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Background, first paragraph: The study samples were those under 65 years of age and at risk group. Nevertheless, there is no clear definition about the “at risk group” in the paper. It is necessary to describe what conditions are considered as at risk group. Have added

2. Background, first paragraph: Why targeted patients under 65 years of age as the study sample? Any specified reason? It is better to provide related references to support the study design. Have added

3. Method, first paragraph: How to choose the 13 pharmacies as the locations of collecting data needs more explanations. added

4. Method, first paragraph: How to conduct the survey to collect information from patients needs more detail descriptions. Is there any questionnaire used? If yes, how to develop the questionnaire? Is there any test of reliability and validity of the questionnaire? Added questionnaire and further details

5. Results, sixth paragraph: For those “100 patients (50%) who had been contacted by their GP about going into their local surgery for their vaccination, but had chosen not to”, it is more relevant to the study objective to explore their reasons of choosing pharmacy as vaccination site. Not really
as all NHS so actually very important to know why not gone to GP

6. Limitations, first paragraph: The authors described that “the data presented are limited to one pharmacy multiple”. This is a generalization issue of interpretation for study results. However, the authors described that “if data from other pharmacies were explored similar results are likely to be found”. Without providing related reference or data, it is hard to support this viewpoint. Omitted

B. Minor Essential Revisions

1. Background, third paragraph: The last sentence of this paragraph describes “The pharmacy service did not impact on the uptake of flu vaccinations from GP surgeries: there was no decrease in GP vaccination rates in the area”. It is better to provide some data to support this description. Have referenced

2. If the data is available, it is interested to know the time of people receiving flu vaccination in the pharmacy. Is it more likely in the weekend or after working hours? If yes, it can provide additional evidence that pharmacy have more convenient opening hours than GP service to provide flu vaccination. Agree would be interesting but data not available at this time

3. Results, sixth paragraph: Table 4 provides redundant information of the study. I suggest to delete it. Disagree have included

C. Discretionary Revisions

1. Background, first paragraph: The first paragraph of Background section is too long. It can be ended in the sentence “This paper explores how prevalent this is and the
reason why people choose to do it”. Then, the rest of sentences in the original first paragraph can be switched as next paragraph. *Have changed the background section and reduced it*

2. Table 1: The total number of patients in second column (n=132) does not equal to the n=100 presented at third column. It should add notes to indicate patients satisfied more than one criteria (as Table 2 did). *altered*

3. Table 3: In the third column, the n should be 199. It is also necessary to add note about the patients satisfied more than one criteria. *changed*

4. References: The reference number 13 did not provide web linkage of the document, if have any. *provided*

**Reviewer 2 Major Compulsory Revisions**

1) The question posed by the authors (what the prevalence is of individuals eligible for free flu vaccinations choosing to pay privately at Boots pharmacies and reasons for this) is well defined but slightly lost in the rather long background section. Sections of the background would be better placed in the methods (parts of background paras 5-7) and discussion (background para 4) – *have moved these paragraphs*

2) and I feel the background would benefit from more references supporting: need for increasing vaccine uptake; published vaccination targets; the statement ‘There is moderate to good evidence from several countries that community pharmacies can safely provide a range of vaccinations’; the statement ‘The uptake of NHS-commissioned flu vaccinations in
Community pharmacies in England have increased significantly in recent years, due in part to published data on the success of locally-driven services.’ Have added some more references

2) At present it is difficult to understand from the methods section exactly how the evaluation was conducted, and the extent of any bias in the data as a result of the sampling methods used, please describe more fully: have described more fully

a) How the 13 pharmacies where additional data were collected, were selected. How was a ‘representative mix of city centre and edge of town pharmacies’ ensured? In these 13 pharmacies were all patients approached for additional information or just a sample, if a sample how were these individuals selected? Have added more detail re purposive sampling and patient selection (every patient asked to complete survey over a period of time)

b) In the methods provide all relevant dates for the study; the methods section mentions survey data from 24th September and 7th December 2012 – this is for the survey in the 13 pharmacies, but eligibility data are mentioned in the results up to 16th March 2013. Eligibility data collected for whole flu season while questionnaire was just done in the smaller sample from Sept – Dec in one pharmacy

3) The results section is a little repetitious e.g. data were collected from 479 pharmacies stated 3 times - I think it would help the reader to consolidate these sections. consolidated

4) Results para 6: it would be helpful to include as an appendix a copy of the survey that was given to participants in the 13 pharmacies so the results can be viewed in the
context of how the questions were posed. 

5) Results para 6 states 50/199 people were aged 65+ therefore were eligible for free vaccination, table 2 indicates 48 people? We collected age – of which 50 people were 65+. Table 2 looks at the reasons for eligibility. Of these, 48 scored themselves as being eligible because they were 65+. The other two patients may have said they were eligible because of another reason.

6) Tables: Please add row totals to all tables – looking at the numbers it is clear some respondents gave more than one answer. Please also expand table titles so they stand alone e.g. include description of sample being considered for each table. For the ‘other’ category in the footnotes it would be helpful to see the number of times (in brackets) each ‘other’ reason was given. 

7) Please expand the discussion to more fully state and discuss: the limitations of the current work due to gaining reasons for paying privately from only 30% of those doing so in a limited number (13) of pharmacies; current work in the context of previous studies (see above). I don’t think you can necessarily extrapolate the data found in this study to other pharmacy multiples (particularly as it’s a small sample of people for some analyses/descriptions and the choice/location/representativeness of pharmacies is not currently clear) so would suggest removal of the statement ‘if data from other pharmacies were explored similar results are likely to be found’. 

Minor Essential Revisions- all done

1) Results para 4 2nd sentence: I think the clarity of this could be improved by the insertion of ‘Of these’ at the start of the sentence (as the 53% relates to a denominator of 5323).

2)) Table 3: should the ‘Proportion of total (n=100)’ actually
read ‘Proportion of total (n=199)?

Discretionary Revisions

1) Results para 6: it is interesting (and concerning if true) that only 50% of the eligible people in this study had been contacted by their GP regarding flu vaccination. Is this likely to be recall bias or are 50% of people genuinely not being contacted? It would be helpful if the authors could discuss this. discussed

2) I think it would be helpful to the reader if an additional figure/flow diagram were included illustrating the different flows of patients/data in this study because it is currently a little difficult to follow. Did not think necessary

Minor issues not for publication all amended

1) Postcode in address of corresponding author requires correction.

2) Inconsistent spelling of immunisation (i.e. immunisation/immunization, sometimes capitalised mid-sentence), please correct.

3) I tend to refer to data in the plural e.g. data were rather than data was 4) Background, para 2: remove capitalisation of Doctor 5) Results para 3: remove close bracket in first sentence 6) Results para 4: chose not choose

7) Results para 4 last sentence: data should not be capitalised

8) Results para 2: 16th March instead of 16 March, for consistency with other date presentation

9) ‘from’ not ‘form’ in competing interest statement