Author’s response to reviews

Title: Training practitioners in preparing systematic reviews: a cross-sectional survey of participants in the Australasian Cochrane Centre training program

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Re: Manuscript identification 1232376461164627

Clare Collett, Ph.D.
Assistant Editor
BioMed Central

Dear Dr. Collett:

Thank you very much for your consideration of our article Training practitioners in preparing systematic reviews: a cross-sectional survey of participants in the Australasian Cochrane Centre training program. As requested, we have revised the paper according to the recommendations of the reviewers (see point-by-point response below), and have completed the manuscript checklist.

Reviewer 1

Discretionary revisions:
1. Remove first aim. Completed as recommended.
2. Rewrite Abstract Background section to reflect background instead of aims. Completed as recommended.
3. Describe in Methods section that respondents were required to agree or disagree with a series of statements, with an opportunity for open-ended responses. Completed as recommended.
4. Alter language stating that lack of time was a 'striking' finding. Completed as recommended. Consider comparing participants who had not completed a review with participants who had completed a review to determine if lack of time was as great a barrier in both groups. We are unable to perform this comparison as participants who had completed a systematic review were excluded from the initial survey population.

Reviewer 2

General comments:
1. A very Cochrane Collaboration orientated report. The appeal might be broadened by adding some discussion of the relationship between training and subsequent productivity. A fair comment, but beyond the scope of our project.
Compulsory revisions:
2. Make it clear in the Abstract Methods section that the survey was done by email and fax. Completed as recommended.
3. Where "time" is referred to as a barrier, be explicit that this is "lack of time." Completed as recommended.
4. Combine the last paragraph of the Background section and the subsequent 3-item list. Completed as recommended. The aims were also rewritten to give consideration to comment #1 of Reviewer 1.
5. Include the actual survey. Completed as recommended.
6. Results, first paragraph, last sentence: give the numbers, not just the percentages. Completed as recommended.
7. Results, fourth paragraph, first sentence: this begins with 14 but it seems to be 13 in Table 1. Changed as the table contained the correct value. Specify the definition of "recently," Removed the phrase, as "recently" was used in the questionnaire, but was not defined.
8. Add discussion of the reliability of answers such as "not enough time." Completed as recommended.
9. Alter language stating that lack of time was a 'striking' finding. Completed as recommended.
10. Alter discussion that one cannot create more time for reviewers. Completed as recommended.
11. In the first sentence of the Conclusions section, clarify "is the issue" and whether the authors have already attended or are attending the training. Completed as recommended.
12. Clarify whether "systematic review of the literature" includes data regardless of publication status. Completed as recommended.

Discretionary revisions
14. Address issue of bias in searching on surname and first initial. Completed as recommended.
15. Include a flow diagram showing number of participants, number of successfully delivered surveys, and number of returned surveys. Completed as recommended.
16. As in point one, consider adding some discussion of the relationship between training and subsequent productivity. As above, a fair comment, but beyond the scope of our project.

Thank you very much for your consideration. We hope that we have adequately addressed the reviewers concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

With best regards,

Janet H. Piehl, M.D. and Sally Green, Ph.D.