Author's response to reviews

Title: Adapting developing country epidemiological assessment techniques to improve the quality of health needs assessments in developed countries

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: MS: 6752811354624677
18/1/05
Dear Editor,

Thank you for considering this revised paper for publication in BioMed Central. We have made the following revisions based on the reviewers’ comments:

- **Title:** the title has been amended to reflect reviewer comments on the difference between ‘methodology’ and ‘a method’ and the phrase ‘in developed countries’ added as suggested by Reviewer 3.

- **The reviewers felt that the paper should provide more detail regarding the results of the actual health needs assessments carried out.** These results have been previously published and the full reports are available on open access on-line and can be downloaded in pdf format. This paper actually aims to demonstrate how we adapted the epidemiological assessment techniques developed by WHO and other agencies for use in a developed country setting. We have clarified this further in the Summary section and at the end of the introductory section and have provided an additional Table summarizing the results of the assessments with clearer reference to how the full reports can be accessed.

- **Reviewer 1 felt we needed to be more explicit about our aims and the results obtained.** This detail is now provided in Table 1.

- **Reviewer 1 indicated that we needed to provide more detail regarding the level of community participation.** The section on community participation (section 2, Results) has been expanded to include additional detail of the actual involvement of community members which was indeed more substantial than the original paper suggested.

- **Reviewer 2 indicated that more detail was needed regarding the application of the method such as sample size calculations, consideration of cluster effects etc.** We have provided more detail in Table 1, in relation to outcomes assessed. Full details of the sampling technique and statistical methods are provided in the
individual reports. It is not possible to reproduce all of the methodological detail in this paper and nor is it our intention to replicate the original reports in full.

- Reviewer 2 pointed out that the term area had not been defined which made the description hard to follow. We have added a sentence indicating the detail available regarding each area covered in the original reports.

- Reviewer 2 indicated we should expand on the distinction between health needs assessment and healthcare needs assessment. The provision of some of the main results in Table 1 confirms our comments in the section ‘Health needs versus health service needs’ at the start of the Results section. We have also expanded this section to include commentary on the incorporation of a qualitative component to the second and third assessments as this added value beyond that of a simple quantitative epidemiological approach.

- Reviewer 3 indicated the need for some minor changes to the text and these have been incorporated as suggested. See ‘background’ section - sentence 3, paragraph 2; Section on adaptions to the original model – sentence 1, paragraph 4 and title Box 1.

We believe that these revisions have substantially improved the paper and we hope that they will be satisfactory.

Many thanks,
Yours sincerely,

Dr Susan Smith (on behalf of co-authors)