Author's response to reviews

Title: Translating research into policy and practice in developing countries: a case study of magnesium sulphate for pre-eclampsia

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report
Title: Translating research into policy in developing countries: a case study of magnesium sulphate for pre-eclampsia
Date: 15 July 2005
Reviewer: Mathieu Ouimet

Reviewer's report:
General
This is a timely, informative manuscript and contributes to knowledge on the barriers to and facilitators of the implementation of the Magpie Trial findings into policy in developing countries.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
NONE

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

On page 16, instead of reporting the means, it would have been more accurate to report the medians as the variables are ordinal. Also it would have been informative to report the number of cases (respondents) from which each mean (hopefully each median) was calculated.

Authors’ response: The paper now reports the medians for this data, as requested. The numbers of respondents from which each median was calculated are presented in a previous section of the paper.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
- On page 5, it is written that “In this paper, we report the findings of a study that examined, firstly, the factors limiting the use of the recently published trial of...”. It would have been probably more accurate to write "the potential factors" instead of "the factors" as these factors were mainly captured through expert opinions.

Authors' response: This has been addressed.

- You are looking at barriers to and facilitators of a specific type of policy changes, i.e. quick policy changes (the Trial was published recently). Perhaps it could be discussed in the conclusion.

Authors’ response: We decided that it would not be useful to raise this point in the conclusion as the questionnaire sent to drug information officers and obstetricians in the study countries did not focus specifically on the Magpie results, but rather on broader issues related to the implementation of magnesium sulphate for the treatment of pre-eclampsia.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests
Reviewer's report
Title: Translating research into policy in developing countries: a case study of magnesium sulphate for pre-eclampsia
Version: 1
Date: 28 July 2005
Reviewer: stephen robert hanney
Reviewer's report:
General
This article is generally well written and provides useful insights on the important topic of research utilisation in developing countries, where there is comparatively limited previous work. The article adopts a broad-brush perspective in relation to a significant new case study and various methods were adopted, successfully in most cases, and integrated to obtain data from a range of sources. Various sensible conclusions are drawn and related to the complexity and diversity of the situations identified in the study. I’ve made my comments using the headings requested, but mostly placed them under the heading ‘discretionary revisions’ because I do not think these points are ‘compulsory revisions’. Nevertheless, some could be quite important.
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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. In the paragraph on limitations (p.21), 2 different points start with ‘firstly’, Even though one is a counter-argument, it should be amended.
Authors’ response: This has been done.
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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. In the opening paragraph of the abstract reference is made to the objective of the study being to examine the translation of findings ‘into policies and actions’. Should the title of the article be slightly amended to reflect this? Or, perhaps, the text slightly altered?
Authors’ response: This has been addressed.
2. The opening paragraph of the article states that ‘evidence from developing countries is particularly thin’. It is true that there is limited evidence but it might be useful to refer at least a little more to that evidence that does exist in relation to developing countries, such as specific articles, for example:
and wider reviews, for example:
Authors’ response: Thank you for these useful references, which are now cited in the introduction.
3. The description of Phase 2 of the methods (p.8) states that data were also collected from
countries that had not participated in the Magpie Trial. This was a good idea, but it might be helpful if the relevant countries were identified in the text rather than just appearing as part of a general list of countries from where drug information officers were approached.

Authors’ response: This has been done – see page 8.

It might then also be useful if at least some analysis was reported on whether there had been any differences between the findings from countries in which the research had been conducted and the others.

Authors’ response: We decided not to pursue this suggestion as we feel that there is insufficient data to make this further analysis meaningful.

4. In several places I believe the text could benefit from providing a little more detail and being more specific, for example, about what is meant by ‘Lack of channels to overcome political barriers’ (Table 2).

Authors’ response: This has been done – see page 14.

Similarly, although various policies are discussed, it might be useful to have some account of what definition of the term ‘policy’ is being adopted, because it can be interpreted in different ways, in particular in relation to the role of professional associations.

Authors’ response: We have included a definition of policy, as understood in this study, on page 6 of the paper.

Some accounts of research utilisation in health policymaking discuss the way in which different levels and definitions of policymaking and different models might be more appropriate in relation to some types of research than others, and this type of approach can also provide a framework for discussion of issues such as the concept of interaction. It might, therefore, be useful to draw on some of the analysis of such issues from accounts provided, for example, in: Hanney S, Gonzalez-Block M, Buxton M, Kogan M: The utilisation of health research in policy-making: concepts, examples and methods of assessment. Health Research Policy and Systems 2003; 1:2. http://www.health-policy-systems.com/content/pdf/1478-4505-1-2.pdf

Authors’ response: Thank you for this useful suggestion. Following from this, we have made some minor changes and additions to the discussion and conclusion sections of the paper.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No
Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests