Author's response to reviews

Title: Methods for dealing with discrepant records in linked population health datasets: a cross-sectional study

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Author's response to reviews:

16 January 2007

The Editor
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Dear Editor

Re: MS: 1604360238123619
Methods for dealing with discrepant records in linked population health datasets: a cross-sectional study
Christine L Roberts, Charles S Algert and Jane B Ford

Thank you for considering the above article for publication in BMC Health Services Research. Please extend our thanks to the reviewers for their interest and helpful comments. We have addressed the Reviewers' comments as follows:

Reviewer: Frank M Sullivan
The sentence on page 4 (paragraph 4) has been revised to show that we used alternative methods of classifying discrepant reports as outlined in the numbered list that follows in the text.

A brief description of the validation studies is now provided in the methods (page 4, paragraph 1).

Capture-recapture methods were not considered because the two data sets in our study lack independence. We have noted this method of estimating the completeness of case identification in the introduction (page 3 paragraph 3) and discussion (page 7, paragraph 3), highlighted the dependency of the two data sets (page 4 paragraph 1).

Reviewer: Cashel D'Arcy James Holman
We agree that it is reasonable to conjecture that more severe cases of hypertension may be more likely to be recorded in both data sets. However we cannot identify any published literature that supports this conjecture - while noting that this type of finding is hard to search for as it tends to be an incidental finding. We have addressed this concern by providing an alternate interpretation (page 8, paragraph 3) while noting that validation studies addressing this issue are needed.

We have referred to capture-recapture methods as noted above.

Our study compares data collected at a single admission event. The discussion of potential discrepancies between multiple admission records for a single individual over an extended period of time is a complex issue and is beyond the scope of this paper.

Yours sincerely
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