Author's response to reviews

Title: How useful are post consultation letters to patients?

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Author's response to reviews:

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Dear Editor

Thank you for the very useful comments from the reviewers which I am happy to respond to.

Reviewer 1: Martin Tattersall

The abstract (page 2 Methods section line 1) and results (p6 Results line 1) have been amended to include the fact that both newly referred and follow-up patients were included in this study.

A comment has been added on p5 Methods line 3 with regard to the writing style of consultants: "Consultants adopted usual practice and wrote for the general practitioners in the way they usually would. No instructions were given to the consultants but all used headings at the beginning of the letter (to the GP) summarising the care and most included a paragraph on tests performed and treatment advised."

In addition more detail was added to the results page 6, Section 1: "No instructions were given to the consultants but all used headings at the beginning of the letter (to the GP) summarising the care and most included a paragraph on tests performed and treatment advised. Despite not receiving any advice as to how to write the letters to patients, all consultants spontaneously adopted a rather discursive chatty letter style whereas to GPs the letters were more traditionally structured with headings and lists."

Review 2: Ann-Louise Caress

The information on patient approach and consent has been moved to Results section p6, line 1 as
Information on quantitative data analysis has been added to the Methods section p5 para 3

References have been added for the Flesch score and the Flesch-Kincaid level p5 para 1, line 6

No specific methodological approach for thematic analysis so no reference inserted

Duplicate material from Results section removed. With regard to additional statistical information requested, the authors feel that the reporting the p values only is appropriate for the test used (Wilcoxin Signed Rank test)

Section 1 line 8 deleted "in length" (p6 section 1, line 11)

Section 2 Apostrophe added to title, and "compared to" changed to "compared with" (p6)

Section 3 1 changed to "one"

Section 3 lines 3-4 commas added

Section 3 para 3, line 1 detail clarified - patient letters

Section 3, para 3, line 2 - detail clarified "several commented on the extra workload and time involved to read and summarise extra letters or less structured letters."

What this study has found - Last item removed. (p9) as suggested.

Table 3 - Title changed (p13)

Table 3 - Category reworded to "Lack of terminology/ missing results and investigations" (p13)

Discretionary revisions

Methods - ethics committee approval moved to beginning of methods section. (p5)

Table 3 - missing/inadequate added to Diagnosis/Drug therapy, Medical summary and patient history categories. An example has been added to the other category. (p13)

If there are any additional points or queries please do not hesitate to get in touch

Kind regards
Martyn R Partridge

Professor of Respiratory Medicine