Author's response to reviews

Title: Multicenter data acquisition made easy

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for your kind letter regarding our paper entitled “Multicenter data acquisition made easy”. We have revised the paper according to the comments made by the two external reviewers (see below). Changes have been done with the track changes function in Microsoft word for windows.

We hope that the paper may be accepted for publication in Trials after these corrections.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the authors,

Jacob Rosenberg, Professor, MD, DSc, FACS, FRCS.
Comments regarding reviewer 1:

1. Page 2, Abstract, Methods and Results Section
   Please consider re-writing the Methods and Results sections of your abstract so that they are consistent with the Methods and Results sections in your paper.
   *The abstract has been re-written as suggested.*

2. Page 3, Background section, paragraph 2
   Please review journal style sheets for referencing websites.
   *The reference has been changed to: “The Googledocs website: [https://docs.google.com/]”*

3. Page 3, Methods section
   I recommend you add a sentence between the Methods section heading and the sub-heading “Creating the master file” which explains what you are going to discuss in your Methods section i.e. “In this section we are going to describe the necessary steps required to…..”
   *This sentence has been inserted: “In this section we are going to describe the necessary steps required to use Googledocs for data acquisition.”*

4. Page 3, Methods section, paragraph 1
   When you discuss that Googledocs/Gmail accounts are very easy to establish could you please add how to establish the account i.e. username/password etc.
   *This sentence has been inserted:”At the Googledocs website, press “Get started” and then get registered with your email and a password.”*

5. Page 3, Methods section, paragraph 1 and 2
   It is unclear between paragraphs 1 and 2 as to the difference between “Spreadsheet” and “Form”. I recognise that submitted forms in Googledocs are presented in a spreadsheet however, I only understood this after I followed your instructions to set up a database. At this point in your paper, could you please explain the differences between and functions of the spreadsheet and the form.
   *This sentence has been inserted: “Later on, when the forms are submitted, they will be presented in a spreadsheet format in Googledocs.”*

6. Page 4, paragraph 3
   If you wish to recommend an approach to database design could you please expand on this in the Discussion section of your paper. At the beginning of this paragraph in your Methods section, please simply report what can be done i.e. I suggest you change the sentence that begins with “We recommend” to read “Each patient visit may (e.g. preoperative, one week, one month etc.) be represented by the creation ……”
   *The sentence has been changed as suggested.*
Please consider adding a sentence that describes how to invite data entry persons.

This sentence has been inserted: “When creation of the form is finished, press “share” and “invite people” and then enter the email addresses of the data entry persons. When sending the invitations, the data manager can choose if the data entry persons should have permission to enter data, to view data and/or to edit data.”

Comments regarding reviewer 2:

1. Security. Please include a section reporting whether or not the web site transmits password information and data in an encrypted format. For example, does it use SSL 2.0? What level of encryption (how many bits)?
   
   We agree that this is relevant information and have added a section with these details under Methods.

2. Technical compatibility. Please include a section reporting user browser compatibility and version requirements. For example, is it required to have JavaScript enabled etc. Please find an added section under Methods.

3. Global data locations and privacy laws. Many HRECs wish to be informed when patient records, even de-identified ones, are transported internationally. It is possible that the hosting Google Server is located in a country that is not participating in the trial. Does Google have a policy stipulating that local country of origin applies to privacy or do the Server’s local country laws apply? What is Google's privacy policy? Keeping in mind that Google likely captures the IP address of the data entry person, which can easily be tracked back to originating hospital, it is possible some patient records could be re-identified by a hacker. If the web site is not encrypted, this possibility is real. Please address in your Discussion. This has been done under the Discussion section.