Author’s response to reviews

Title: Registration of non-commercial randomised clinical trials: the feasibility of using trial registries to monitor the number of trials

Authors:

James P Raftery (raftery@soton.ac.uk)
Eleanor Fairbank (E.R.Fairbank@soton.ac.uk)
Lisa Douet (L.douet@soton.ac.uk)
Louise Dent (L.Dent@soton.ac.uk)
Alison Price (A.M.Price@soton.ac.uk)
Ruairidh Milne (R.Milne@soton.ac.uk)
Tom Walley (T.Walley@Liverpool.ac.uk)

Version: 4 Date: 13 July 2012

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor

Thank you for your letter and comments on our draft article "Registration of non-commercial randomised clinical trials: the feasibility of using these data to monitor the number of trials”.

We have amended the article to take account of the reviewer’s comments and to otherwise make improvements. The reviewer made 5 comments each of which we responded to as follows:

1. errors in tables to do with missing or unnecessary decimal points. The two errors in Table 1 have been corrected.

2. “The tables… have too many numbers. It is unclear why each and every year has to be reported in place of categories”. Although we have improved the formatting of the years on the two graphs, we have retained the year by year totals as otherwise the differences between the different sources would be obscured.

3. “The number of trials registered in 2000 and 2001 looks 4 or 5 fold higher than those estimated by Chalmers. Please justify the statement that the trials estimated in this were similar to those estimated by Chalmers”. We have amended the text to note that while the numbers estimated in this study were similar to those in Chalmers up to 1998, they were considerably higher than Chalmers et al for the remaining period, 1999-2002. Possible reasons for these differences are also discussed in the amended text.

4. “Figure 2 is poorly presented”. We have re-done Figure 2 as a stacked bar chart which hopefully is more readable. The change of format also distinguishes it from Figure 1 which is a line chart.

5. “Some discussion about the interpretation of the number of trials would be
important. For example it strikes me that fewer trials isn’t necessarily a bad thing on the ground that I’d prefer one good trial to multiple second rate trials.” This point is addressed in the discussion.

In addition you asked to ensure that the article was formatted as required by Trials. This has now been done, with references in square brackets. Some typographical errors have been corrected and the language made more precise. As requested the revisions are shown using Track changes.

We hope this is sufficient. Thank you for your comments.

Best wishes

James Raftery