Author's response to reviews

Title: The value of the PRECIS wheel in an ongoing study: the BLISTER trial

Authors:

Daniel J Bratton (DBratton@ctu.mrc.ac.uk)
Andrew J Nunn (ajn@ctu.mrc.ac.uk)
Fenella Wojnarowska (fenella.wojnarowska@ndm.ox.ac.uk)
Gudula Kirtschig (g.kirtschig@vumc.nl)
Anna Sandell (anna.sandell@nottingham.ac.uk)
Hywel C Williams (hywel.williams@nottingham.ac.uk)

Version: 3 Date: 2 March 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report

Title: The value of the PRECIS wheel in an ongoing study: the BLISTER trial

Version: 2 Date: 27 February 2012

Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith

Reviewer's report:
In general, the replies were sensible. However, the revised manuscript still has some issues that should be considered.
1. Page 4, line 52. Delete [s] on [reflects] to read [reflect].
Response: Thank you. Now updated

2. Page 6, line 108. Replace [fails to] by [does not]. Since this idea is not yet common in the literature, then how can someone fail it?
Response: Point taken. We agree. Now updated

3. Page 9, lines 185 and 194. Replace [range] by [min and max]. It would also be okay to use minimum and maximum rather than the short forms.
Response: We have now replaced “range” with “minimum (most explanatory)” and “maximum (most pragmatic)” just to make it clear what the minimum and maximum scores represent.

4. Page 11, after line 251. Since the raw data seems to contain outliers in the data, it might be better to suggest reporting median and quartiles since the mean and sd can be distorted by outliers. When outliers are detected with say a boxplot, then the whiskers might also be suggested with a note that the axis contained an outlier and its magnitude.
Response: We have now added a column to table 2 reporting the median score in each domain. Since there were only 5 observations in each domain we only looked for extreme outliers. It would be inappropriate to use statistical plots to find other outliers since the numbers are so low.

5. Page 13, line 301. Add [GP] from Table 1.
Response: We have now changed GPs to general practitioners

6. Page 16, last column of Table 2. Why not at least add the median and maybe the IQR. If some of the values seem to be outliers, why not note them in some way.
Response: We have now reported the median in an extra column – thank you for the suggestion. With only 5 scores for each domain the extreme outliers should hopefully be easy to spot in the table. Large differences between the means and medians or large ranges in Figure 2 also highlight the domains in which outliers may be present. Therefore we do not think any extra information (such as IQRs) is needed.

7. Page 16, line 376. Why not add the software [Microsoft Paint with the version number] you used to generate the PRECIS wheel. Maybe you might give others permission to copy your not marked up version, attributing it to you.
Response: The not marked up version of the PRECIS wheel (in figure 1) is copied straight from Thorpe et al. so it would not be appropriate to allow others to attribute it to us. We have now mentioned in Figure 2’s caption that a simple picture editing program was used to plot the scores on the PRECIS wheel. Perhaps there are much better software programmes out there for drawing the PRECIS wheel, so we do not feel especially confident in recommending Microsoft Paint as the suggested programme. Thank you for the suggestion.