Author's response to reviews

Title: Active ingredients are reported more often for pharmacologic than non-pharmacologic interventions: an illustrative review of reporting practices in titles and abstracts

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Nicola McCleary. Illustrative review of reporting practices in titles and abstracts

Cover letter

Dear Editor of Trials

Please find attached a revised manuscript entitled ‘Active ingredients are reported more often for pharmacologic than non-pharmacologic interventions: an illustrative review of reporting practices in titles and abstracts’. This manuscript has been resubmitted after changes were made at the request of the editorial team. The specific changes made are outlined below.

The issue raised by the editorial team concerned the use of the term ‘active ingredients’ in describing interventions, which was found to be confusing. As a consequence, we have edited the first paragraph within the background section of the manuscript, and it now includes a comprehensive definition of the term and explains its adoption in the UK complex intervention literature in relation to non-pharmacologic interventions. Specifically, we explain that the term ‘active ingredient’ is used in the complex intervention literature to refer to the components within an intervention that can be specifically linked to its effect on outcomes such that, if they were omitted, the intervention would be ineffective.

We have also added a sentence relating to this to the abstract and have made slight changes throughout the paper to facilitate clarification of this issue. Slight changes have also been made throughout the paper to compensate for the increased word count of the manuscript resulting from the addition of the extra explanation in the background section.

We hope you find these clarifications useful, and look forward to your response in due course.

Yours faithfully,

Nicola McCleary

For the author group