Author’s response to reviews

Title: A cluster-randomized trial to determine the impact of hotspot-targeted interventions on malaria transmission

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Version: 5 Date: 21 December 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,
Thank you for considering our manuscript for publication in the journal Trials. We apologize if the reviewer felt we did not address all issues appropriately. We had some problems with the lines the reviewer was referring to and in our experience some of the issues raised like adding spaces is routinely part of the editorial process and not something that the authors are asked to do. We have done our best to adhere to author guidelines and I have gone through the entire document once again to try and make sure all comments are addressed. I hope this is the case now.

Warm regards,
Teun Bousema

Reviewer’s report
Title: A cluster-randomized trial to determine the impact of hotspot-targeted interventions on malaria transmission
Version: 4 Date: 19 December 2012
Reviewer: Charlie Goldsmith
Reviewer’s report:
In the revision, the authors have claimed that all the changes have been made or stated reasonably why they were not. However, many of the changes were indeed NOT made so one has to wonder if the revised manuscript was checked by the person who wrote the response letter. Issues NOT revised from the last review were:

1. Item 6. One IQR was changed but not the other. See P(age) 6, I(line) 126 where the text could read [houses (first quartile – third quartile 1-3)…].
Done

2. Item 12. Spaces between numbers and inequalities. Not done on P 7, I 158; P 21, I 484.
   This change was indeed missed in two instances. We have updated them.

3. Item 17. Many other instances not changed. P 11, I 259; P 12, I 274; P 18, I 422; P 20, I 458; P 24, I 561.
   We misinterpreted this comment. Apologies for that. We have now deleted it where appropriate. In one instance (line 276) we have chosen to keep it as it is. We believe this is now addressed appropriately.

4. Item 22. P 16, I 373 and 374 still not adequately described to be reproducible.
   I realize our original description of the randomization was rather succinct. I have tried to be as complete as possible, I hope this is sufficient. When I compare this description with that in for example Brooker et al, Trials 2010, I do not feel we are now inadequately describing our randomization process.

5. Item 34. Trials likes to publish up to the first 30 authors before using [et al].
   This was not done for R(eference)s 2, 9, 20, 25, 27, 28, 32, 50, and 54.
   We apologize and have now updated these references, including reference 22 that also still had et al.
Please refer to the revised clean document when checking formatting according to Trials guidelines. The tracked document still has some mistakes in them since references are active. The clean document is, as far as we can judge, completely in line with Trials instructions for authors.

The following issues were detected in the new reading of the revised manuscript.

6. P 8, l 171 uses a different notation than l 184. Also P 37, l 939 twice. I am not 100% sure what the reviewer refers to. I assume it is about the division of the area. The entire 100km2 area was divided in 20 2.5x2km blocks, these were subdivided in 20 500x500m cells that were each again subdivided in 4 250x250 subcells. We cannot find any mistakes in the text as it is but added a sentence to make it clear that each block is 2.5x2km and consists of 4x5 cells.

7. P 10, l 228 and P 14, l 320 use two different temperatures to define febrile. The difference is due to the differences in measurements. Axillary 37.2, tympanic 37.5. We have improved the manuscript to make that clearer and explicitly state axillary where 37.2 is used.

8. P 11, l 251. Should this source read [Sigma, Aldrich, UK]? We have improved this. It should be Sigma Aldrich, Gillingham, UK.

9. P 14, l 322. Which city?
Kachigam. This has been updated.

10. P 20, l 460. Replace [Florida] by [FL]. Also noted before! Apologies. This is now done.

11. P 21, l 496 to 502. Provide a R or cite the software used to compute this sample size.
We have provided a reference that we used for our calculations

12. P 22, l 509. Drop [In order] and capitalize [To] as the words are redundant in English.
We dropped the only ‘in order’ that was in the document, in line 510 of the revised manuscript.

13. P 22 and 23, l 519 to 5353. Provide a R as not all readers will be familiar with these types of analyses.
This has been done
For the GEE analysis, we have provided the reference:

For the multilevel mixed effects models, we have provided the reference:

Done