Author’s response to reviews

Title: Protocol registration or development may benefit the reporting, design and conduct of dose-response meta-analysis: Empirical evidence from a literature survey

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Version: 2 Date: 17 Jan 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Katharina Allers (Reviewer 2): Although the authors have further strengthened the manuscript in response to the reviewers’ comments, some issues remain

Response: Thanks very much for your in-depth comments and suggestions, which helps a lot to further improve the quality of our manuscript. We’ve revised it and the point to point responses were as follow:

Overall, you should clearly distinguish between a priori registration/protocol publication and developing a protocol. At least discuss that a supplemented protocol does not ensure that it was developed a priori and does not have the advantage of reducing duplication which would be given when a protocol is registered or published in advance. Moreover, I would suggest explaining shortly that this is the reason why you conducted the sensitivity analysis.

Response: We’ve added the illustration for supplemented protocol in the context “A post hoc sensitivity analysis was conducted by excluding 3 DRMAs only provided a supplemented protocol (as well as the 6 matched DRMAs), considering that supplemented protocol does not ensure that it was developed a priori.”
Thank you for your explanation concerning my comment 2h) about the option "not applicable", but why not mentioning this in the manuscript?

Response: We’ve added this in the manuscript. “(we treated “unclear” as not)”

Also your comment to my question 3e) should be explained in the methods to be more transparent.

Response: Thanks very much for this suggestion. We’ve added this in the methods part. “If a DRMA was registered at PROSPOERO and clinicatrials.gov, we treated it as PROSPERO which is specific for registration of SR/MA.”

Although I am not a native speaker, I think that the manuscript would benefit from further language editing.

Response: We’ve edited the language by discussing with an experienced English expert.