Author’s response to reviews

Title: Telephone counselling by nurses in Norwegian primary care out-of-hours services: A cross-sectional study

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Author’s response to reviews:

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Dear Editor

Thank you for your comments, we have addressed them as indicated below.

1. Thank you for clarifying that you received permission to access and use data from the Watchtower database. Please can you include the following statement in the Ethics approval and consent to participate section of the Declarations:

“The Watchtower database is owned and managed by our institution, the National Centre for Emergency Primary Health Care. Researchers within the institution can use data from the Watchtower database for research projects. The leader of the Watchtower project gives the researchers access to the data needed for each specific project. The researchers do not need an ethical clearance to access these data, as this is already approved on behalf of the institution”

Answer:

The statement above has been included in the Ethics approval and consent to participate section of the Declarations, page 17 and 18.

2. In the Ethics approval and consent to participate section please could you also clarify which Regional Committee approved the Watchtower project.
Please could you also clarify which ethics committee waived the need for consent to participate and clearly state the full name of the ethics committee in the Ethics approval and consent to participate section. If the need for consent is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including a reference to the relevant legislation.

Answer:

The following statement has been added to the Ethics approval and consent to participate section, page 17: "The Watchtower project has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and by the privacy ombudsman for research for Uni Research (statement no. 2007/17049). The project was considered by the Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REC West, Bergen, statement no. 2012/1094) which concluded that there was no need for formal dispensation from professional secrecy requirements or consent to participate. This is according to national regulations, since the data were anonymised" (Ref: Act on medical and health research (the Health Research Act) https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2008-06-20-44).

3. Please use initials only rather than full names in the Authors' contributions section.

Answer:

In the Authors’ section the full names have been replaced with initials.

In addition, a new reference has been added, reference number 32: Raknes G, Hunskaar S. Reasons for encounter by different levels of urgency in out-of-hours emergency primary health care in Norway: a cross sectional study. BMC Emerg Med. 2017;17:19. The new reference has been published in between this and our last revision, and is written by the two co-authors of this article. It contains information on reasons for encounter to the Norwegian out-of-hours service, using the ICPC-2 system. Furthermore, the table in “Additional file 1” was developed for use in both articles, and since the article by Raknes and Hunskaar (ref nr. 32) is now published, a reference to this has been made under the table in “Additional file 1”.

We hope our response to your questions is satisfactory, and that the article will be acceptable for publishing in BMC Family Practice.

On behalf of the authors

Vivian Midtbø

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