Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparing databases: determinants of sexually transmitted infections, HIV diagnoses, and lack of HIV testing among men who have sex with men

Authors:

Chantal C den Daas (chantal.den.daas@rivm.nl)
Maaike M Goenee (m.goenee@rutgerswpf.nl)
Bouko BHW Bakker (b.bakker@live.nl)
Hanneke H de Graaf (h.degraaf@rutgerswpf.nl)
Eline ELM Op de Coul (eline.op.de.coul@rivm.nl)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dr. Minichiello  
Editor, BMC Public Health  
Utrecht, August 25th, 2015  

Dear Dr. Minichiello,

We would like to thank you for your decision letter regarding our manuscript (MS# 2501535031671181), entitled “Comparing databases: determinants of sexually transmitted infections, HIV diagnoses, and lack of HIV testing among men who have sex with men”. We are happy to now be able to submit a second revised version of the manuscript.

As you will see from the responses we were able to address the comments. We hope that you can consider the revised version of the manuscript for publication in BMC Public Health.

Sincerely, also on behalf of my co-authors,

Chantal den Daas
Editor’s comments

This comparison study was not discussed with a Dutch ethics committee, as it involves secondary analysis of databases that were individually ethically evaluated as described in the methods section. We have now made this more explicit by adding ‘This study was a secondary analysis of three anonymized databases described below.’ (line 126).

Reviewer 1, Fengyi Jin

1) We named the factor condom use, however as this might have caused confusion, we have clarified this by naming the factor non-condom use instead (see line 43 in the abstract).

2) As the abstract has a limited word count, and explaining time frames is a methodological concept, we have chosen not to add this to the abstract. Also, because than we compared three databases with different ways of measuring, we have saved detailed description for the method section. Specifically, time frames for each database and outcome have been explained in Table 1.

We are not entirely sure what the reviewer means with ‘Tables should be self-explanatory’, as no further details were given, and we believe our tables are already self-explanatory.

Also, the reviewer inquires about whether STIs in SOAP were diagnosed on the single visit during the study period or previous medical history was also searched? We have clarified this in line 158-159, which now reads ‘In SOAP, laboratory diagnoses were available for STI/HIV, as well as self-reported HIV infection.’ Previous medical history was only added in the outcome HIV infection.