Author's response to reviews

Title: "A systematic review of training programmes for recruiters to randomised controlled trials"

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Authors’ Comments:

We would like to thank the reviewer for taking the time to comment on this paper. We have listed our responses to each point raised and highlight the subsequent changes to the manuscript. We look forward to your response.

Reviewer’s report

Title: "A systematic review of training programmes for recruiters to randomised clinical trials"
Version: 2
Date: 12 June 2015
Reviewer: Janine Dretzke

Reviewer’s report: This has been much improved in terms of clarity around the methodology. A couple of remaining queries:

Databases were searched using text words and subject headings (with unlimited truncations) for ‘recruit’, ‘train’, ‘RCT’ and ‘trial’.

1. Search strategies
In the search strategies listed, it doesn't look like there were any relevant MeSH terms, though this is stated in the text. Could you clarify this?

Response: The full search strategy in the appendix is accurate. We have now amended the sentence relating to the search strategy (page 5):

‘Studies were identified from Medline, Embase, CINAHL, the Cochrane Library and ERIC databases up until 14th July 2015. Search terms relating to recruitment, training and RCTs were combined to identify studies.’

Further, the searches are somewhat out of date. The search probably needs updating, e.g. your own study is not included (Training recruiters to randomized trials to facilitate recruitment and informed consent by exploring patients' treatment preferences. Nicola Mills1*, Jane M Blazeby1, Freddie C Hamdy2, David E Neal3, Bruce Campbell4, Caroline Wilson1, Sangeetha Paramasivan1 and Jenny L Donovan1). If updating is not feasible, then perhaps it could be acknowledged that there may have been more recent publication, and any known ones could be highlighted, including whether the findings are consistent with your review findings. Alternatively, you could include only better quality studies from an updated search (i.e. RCTs only) and see what they add (if anything).

Response: We have not included the Mills paper because it is a comparison of trained recruiters from the Donovan et al (2009) ProtecT study versus untrained recruiters from other RCTs. In the review, we have stated that where more than one publication of the same study was found, the publication with the most complete data was included. Since the Donovan et al (2009) has the most information on training and delivery, we have included this paper in the review instead [19]. In light of your suggestion we have updated the review by repeating the search from November 2013 to July 2015. From this, two studies have been added to the review [25, 26]. The manuscript, tables, and figures have been updated accordingly.

Table 1. I still find this confusing because the study design and comparators are not stated. Perhaps this could be ordered by study design (so an additional row with RCTs, followed by the three RCTS, then a row with controlled non-randomised etc.-as in Table 2

Response: Table 1 now includes an additional column with study design, and has also been reorganised so that the included studies are clustered by design.

Minor comment
P17. Should state that the review was reported using PRIISMA guidelines as they are for reporting not conduct (could refer to the Cochrane handbook if that's what was used for methodological guidance).
Response: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have now changed the sentence on page 5 to read:

‘The review was conducted in accordance with Cochrane guidelines [with reference to the Cochrane Handbook].’

We have also updated the sentence on page 17, which now states:

‘This review was written in accordance with PRISMA guidelines to ensure that it was reported fully and transparently.’