Author’s response to reviews

Title: Advancing 'real world' trials that take account of social context and human volition. Beyond naive reductionism

Authors:

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr Munya Dimairo,

Thank you very much for the comments to our manuscript: TRLS-D-17-00354 “Advancing 'real world' trials that take account of social context and human volition. Beyond naive reductionism”.

We submit to you the revised manuscript. The suggested revisions on how to improve the manuscript further have been made. We have included a point-by-point response within the 'Response to Reviewers' box in the submission system and used 'tracked changes' when revising the manuscript.

We can also confirm that the revised manuscript conforms to the journal style.

Best wishes,

Anders Blædel Gottlieb Hansen
Allan Jones
Response to Reviewers

Editor report:

We feel that this commentary could be improved by minimising the use of jargon. I remember we struggled with the original commentary you are responding to because it was too technical for most readers to understand the underlying concept and why it matters. We need to find a way to break this technical bubble.

Authors’ reply:

Thank you very much for your comments, and for your suggestions on how we can improve the manuscript further. We have attempted to increase understanding by using lay-language alongside some of the terminology, as well as through providing examples (e.g. please see page 3 under the section Background).

Reviewer reports:

Reviewer #1: Thank you to the authors for raising once again this important issue. The simplicity of the commentary as a plea to funders is direct and engaging and I enjoyed reading the paper very much. I think it will be of interest to Trials readers with some very minor revision. Some minor points for consideration below:

Authors’ reply:

Thank you very much for your comments, and for your suggestions on how we can improve the manuscript further. We have endeavored to include all of your suggestions in the revised manuscript.

Page 3/Line 11: I think it would help increase understanding of the issue if the authors used some lay-language in addition to some terms used e.g. 'open systems' = real-world contexts and also give examples of what this kind of research might look like e.g. RCTs in schools or whatever they think appropriate.

Authors’ reply:

We have attempted to increase understanding by using lay-language alongside some of the terminology, as well as through providing examples (e.g. please see page 3 under the section Background).
Reviewer #2: I find your article relevant, not needing any major revision. However, the ideas are not new, and the need for real-life studies has been already recognised by the research community. I will leave it up to the journal editors to decide whether this article adds enough to the ongoing discussion about the usefulness of pure RCTs vs. studies taking into account the contextual factors.

Authors’ reply:

Thank you very much for your comments. We agree that the research community is increasingly more open to studies that take into account contextual factors, and that such ideas are now recognized more broadly. The challenge of improving external validity in studies across the spectrum of health research is still ongoing. The commentary is an attempt to keep the debate alive and focused on the practical aspects of supporting to a greater degree all phases of ‘real world’ trials as advocated by the MRC framework.