Author’s response to reviews

Title: Design, planning and implementation lessons learnt from a surgical multi-centre Randomised Controlled Trial

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer’s comments:

1. The distinction between methods and results is now much clearer, and the abstract is much improved in this respect. A few language errors or style issues have been introduced in the edits (see further below).

Response: All previous edits have been reviewed and corrected as appropriate.

2. What I'm still missing is something more in the results related to the costing methodology - e.g. was the assumed hours per recruit adequate? Did you over-cost the study based on your screening assumptions?

Response: Added some text to the discussion as we did not collect data that allows us to answer this (lines 385 and 407-410). A sentence related to screening data has also been added (lines 273-275).
Abstract:

3. Line 34-35 could perhaps still be more accessible. "To ensure integrity of the data, the timing of the baseline assessment was reviewed and investigated." - what was reviewed/investigated? why not "the baseline assessments were reviewed to ensure the timing did not impact on the outcome?"

Response: Amended as suggested (lines 35-36).

4. Similarly, as you do not have the word count to elaborate on "reference-class forecasting" in the abstract, you may wish to revert to the kind of paraphrasing used later on in the body of the manuscript.

Response: Amended to ‘forecasting of consent rates based on similar trials’ (lines 31-32).

5. Line 45/46: it's not clear enough that you're looking at the timing of the data here.

Response: Amended to ‘The comparison of the patient reported data collected prior to randomisation and prior to treatment provided confidence in the baseline data.’(lines 41-42).

6. Line 90: this is now toned down as requested by reviewer 2, but doesn't make sense - do you mean "although there is some evidence"?

Response: Yes, this has been corrected (line 83).

7. Lines 153ff - While I accept the authors' argument that costing is important, some of this added text might sit more comfortably in the Background section, and doesn't link very clearly to the original text on CRN costing, which now seems underdeveloped.

Note there is now no longer a reference to the Box 1 within the text.

Response: Some of the added text has been moved to the background (lines 85-93) and some deleted, and some additional text to the methods to link back to it (lines 174 and 180-182). Box 1 is referenced in line 180. Some text has also been added to Box 1.
8. Line 266 - review language (tense)
Response: This has been amended (line 266).

9. Line 302 - referenced publication is from 2016, not 2013
Response: This has been corrected for every figure/table referencing this paper (Tables 1, 2, 3 & 4 and Figures 1 & 6).

10. Lines 381-384 - better but wording could be further improved (e.g. "of the original 350 recruitment target" sounds awkward)
Response: Amended sentence (lines 373-375).

11. Line 397 - review language.
Response: Amended sentence (lines 392-396).