Author’s response to reviews

Title: Relapse rates after elective discontinuation of anti-TNF therapy in rheumatoid arthritis: A Meta-analysis and Review of Literature

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Bethan Wicker

Editorial Office

BMC Rheumatology

Dear Editor,

Re: BRHM-D-18-00040R1

Thank you for the useful comments regarding our manuscript. We wish to submit a clean revised version that takes into account the Editor’s and Reviewers’ comments. All authors have read the manuscript and approve its submission to the journal. They declare no conflict of interest. Our responses to the points raised are as follows:

Editor
Q1: Please address the reviewer comments below.

A1: Done (see below).

Q2: Please note that all manuscripts must contain all the following sections under the heading 'Declarations'. The Declarations should follow the Conclusions section, and before the References.

- Abbreviations
- Ethics approval and consent to participate
- Consent for publication
- Availability of data and material
- Competing interests
- Funding
- Authors' contributions
- Acknowledgements

Please see here for details on the information to be included in these sections:

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If the information required is already provided in the main manuscript, please also copy the relevant statements to the Declarations.

If any of the sections are not relevant to your manuscript, please include the heading and write 'Not applicable' for that section.

A2: Changes done.

Q3: Please remove the declarations information that is currently present on the Title page.

A3: Changes done.

Q4: Please rename Objectives to Background.

A4: Changes done.

Q5: Please rename Introduction to Background.

A5: Changes done.
Q6: Please add a “Conclusions” section after the “Discussion” section. This should state clearly the main conclusions of the research article and give a clear explanation of their importance and relevance.

A6: Changes done.

Q7: Please remove the duplicate tables present in your manuscript. Tables should be present in the manuscript, after the references, and not attached as supplementary files.

A7: Done as requested.

Q8: At this stage, please upload your manuscript as a single, final, clean version that does not contain any tracked changes, comments, highlights, strikethroughs or text in different colours. All relevant tables/figures/additional files should also be clean versions. Figures (and additional files) should remain uploaded as separate files.

A8: Done as requested.

Reviewer 2

Q1: Introduction line 7 page 4: "(...) sex differences tend to diminish in older age groups with femal to male ratio of- [1]." The actual ratio has gone missing.

A1: We apologise for the confusion. The ratio has now been added.

Q2: Tables 1 and 2: The author's name of study 6 is "van der Maas". In both tables the name has been misspelled. This should be corrected.

A2: Changes done.

Q3: Figure 1: In the third box, "(10)" should be "(n=10)".

A3: Changes done.

Reviewer 3

Q1: Page 7 line 37 “… standard error of the estimated event rates was plotted against the logarithmic transformation of the estimated event rates” it is not consistent with figure 5, which shows “logit event rate”. The logarithm transformation and the logit transformation are not exactly the same.

A1: We wish to thank the Reviewer for highlighting this inconsistency. The sentence has been rephrased as follows: “the standard error of the estimated event rates was plotted against the logit event rates.”
Q2: Figure 2. The study name column doesn’t align with the other column. In the same figure, event rates would only be between 0 and 1. The bar plots showed the range from -1 to 1. Also, the confidence intervals showed for the event rates are many times skewed towards one of the two sides, especially when the estimations are close to 0 or 1. Showing values in the logit scale will make it easier to compare across studies. I would probably make the bar plots with logit transformed rates, but show the x-axis still with rates in normal scale so it is easy to interpret.

A2: Figure 2 has been amended as requested. In our opinion, the event rate is preferable to logit rates as it is a direct measure of the outcomes.

Q3: Page 9 line 15-18: "imputation plotted no missing studies on the right side. The trim and fill method adopted to assess the impact of publication bias, showed that point estimation and 95% confidence interval for the combined relapse rates remain uncharted after trim and fill test(0.45, 95% CI=0.28=0.51)"

While results from imputation and the trim and fill methods are both quite persuasive, it helps to include some descriptions on how/why these methods and their results indicated no significant impact of publication bias, since usage of them are still quite limited in field.

A3: As requested, relevant explanatory sentences have now been added (page 7, lines 8-11).

Yours sincerely,

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