

*** Authors' responses in bold below ***

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Recommendation:

Comments:

The responses to my review are clear and sensible. I thank the authors for this. A few minor comments:

Authors' response: Thank you for your positive feedback and for re-reviewing our paper. We have responded to your comments below.

- "The only criterion for carrying out meta-analyses was the availability of raw data to enable us to do so." – raw data is often used to refer to the original individual participant data, but here you mean the appropriate summary results I think. Perhaps re-word. Indeed, more details are needed about exactly what data were extracted (e.g. odds ratios, relative risks, etc) and how.

Authors' response:

Apologies for the lack of clarity. We did not use individual participant data and have reworded the sentence so it now reads: 'The only criterion for carrying out meta-analyses was the availability of sufficient outcomes data.'

Details of the outcomes data extracted were already described in Table 2, but for clarity we have added the following text to the data extraction methods section of the paper: 'For enrolment, we extracted the number of individuals invited, approached or reached during recruitment period (denominator) and the number who consented to take part in the clinical trial (numerator). We included the proxy denominator 'total number of participants', where the intervention was targeting a subgroup within the trial population (e.g. a minority ethnic group or specific geographical region) and subgroup proportion with/without the intervention were compared. For retention, we extracted the number of individuals who consented to take part (denominator) and the number who adhered to the trial protocol and/or completed follow-up for the longest period of time investigated by the authors (numerator).'

This duplicates the information in the first 3 rows of Table 2 (variables extracted and included in meta-analyses), so we have removed these rows and revised the table title to 'variables extracted and included in subgroup analyses'.

Please note that we added a sensitivity analysis excluding studies using the proxy denominator 'total participants' in response to comments by Reviewer 6 during the first round of revisions. This did not alter the findings (see Results section).

- Change univariate meta-regression to univariable meta-regression.

Authors' response. We have made this change.

Best wishes, Richard Riley

Additional Questions:

Please enter your name: Richard Riley

Job Title: Professor of Biostatistics

Institution: Keele University

Reimbursement for attending a symposium?: No

A fee for speaking?: No

A fee for organising education?: No

Funds for research?: No

Funds for a member of staff?: No

Fees for consulting?: No

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