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A framework for re-evaluating established health screening practices

There is increasing awareness of the complexity of screening (earlier detection), including risks of harm to participants. The authors call for a systematic and transparent approach to re-evaluation of screening practices and suggest a framework to achieve this goal.

Dear Mrs. Ropers,

Thank you for sending us this paper and giving us the chance to consider your work again. I apologise for the delayed response but our covid content has taken priority in recent months. This paper remains of interest and is progressing in the right direction. I was hoping to move to acceptance at this stage but looking at the paper again this still needs work to shape this into our preferred style and I think all authors will need to be in agreement about this before we move ahead.

I appreciate the changes you have made and thank you for your responses to our previous comments. Our analysis articles are 2000 word debates with supporting data. Pure framework papers tend not to fit well into this format as they read in a more academic way, my recommendations are mostly related to style to bring this in line with our analysis articles and improve the experience for the readership.

Editorial comments:

- *Please consider a more journalistic style headline eg: Established health screening programmes: time for re-evaluation" or "Established screening programmes need regular re-evaluation"
- *In the key messages, switch the first two bullet points so the initial bullet explains the risk/benefit profile of screening followed by the bullet on what external factors might affect this - this order makes more sense to the reader.
- *In the third bullet, rather than say you are proposing a framework, instead it may be better to say what you are actually proposing is regular/built in re evaluation of established screening practices. The fourth bullet which describes the framework can be removed as this is too specific and detailed for a key message.
- *In the introduction, edit the final paragraph to say here you consider what is needed to put such a recommendation into practice, rather than describing the framework in detail.
- *The section on why to screening practices need re-evaluation can be written in a more journalistic way. Start with a sentence that outlines essentially that diseases/disease profiles are dynamic and that we must be set up to respond to changes (if I have understood what you are saying correctly).
- *Remove all lists from subtitles ie step 1 step 2, reason 1 reason 2 etc and include journalistic sub heads only.
- *Consider a more journalistic sub head for "three important elements in screening re-evaluation" for example "How can we ensure screening re-evaluation is robust?" This section is relatively short so the subheads can be removed in favour of fluid prose which will enhance the reader experience and make this less disjointed.
- *Change "Proposed Framework" to a more journalist style header such as "Moving forward" or "establishing/embedding re-evaluation"
- *The specific detail about the framework will be of less interest to generalist readers who will be more engaged by the discussion around the need for this move and the reasons behind your argument. The framework section is too didactic as it stands and needs to be written in a more journalistic way to keep the reader engaged. Our readers will appreciate what a steering committee is and how evidence is synthesised so the detail can be reduced here so that it does not detract from your argument. There is substantial repetition between the framework box and the main text which needs editing out. A shorter,

sharper couple of paragraphs which outline the recommended approach (referring to the box) and how you think this will work in practice ie who is accountable is sufficient here given the comprehensive detail within the box.

*The challenges and conclusions sections can be further developed if the framework description is reduced.

I have also created a pdf with some edits that I will send directly to the corresponding author to aid the revision.

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I do hope these comments will be helpful and will help us to move the paper closer to an analysis than it currently stands. I appreciate this has been a long process and I apologise for the delays, I will aim to turn this around quickly once you return the revision.

Do feel free to get in touch with me via email if you have any queries regarding the comments.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sophie Cook
Head of scholarly comment
scook@bmj.com

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