

RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE AND REVIEWERS – BMJ 2019-048737R1

We thank the reviewers for considering we have addressed their previous concerns adequately in the revised version of our manuscript. Please find below our response to the minor points raised by reviewer #5,

COMMENT	RESPONSE	EDITS IN MANUSCRIPT
REVIEWER #5		
<p>The authors have responded to reviewers comments adequately and I would be happy to support publication of the manuscript. Having said that, there are three minor points that the authors might want to consider as I think will aid with some of the clarity in the results.</p> <p>1) Figure(s) 2 - please provide within each subfigure a label to identify which exposure marker is being used for the comparison. This is done in the Figure Legends but given the number of subfigures, it would be much easier for a reader to keep track on each individual plot.</p> <p>2) Figure(s) 3 - The points representing each one of the studies are misleading as, I believe, these are not what are being used to generate the splines. In a simple view, there is a perception that all dots are 'in the middle" suggesting generally that there is no association. The issue with this is that these dots are averages and do not take into consideration the differences within each study (which is the real strength in this paper). Please could you either delete these dots or think of alternative ways to represent this information which would not confuse readers?</p> <p>3) The use of the Newcastle-Ottawa scale might attract criticism as ROBINS-I is now seen as a better (certainly newer) option. Please could you consider mentioning this in your Limitations section? The ROBINS-I page in Cochrane even suggests that the N-O score is an alternative so this might be used as reference.</p>	<p>We thank the reviewer for supporting publication of our manuscript.</p> <p>We have updated Figure 2 including a label for each of the six exposures similar as in Figure 3 as suggested.</p> <p>We have deleted the dots from Figures 3a-f as suggested by the reviewer</p> <p>We have edited the limitation section in the discussion as suggested.</p>	<p>Manuscript edited (Figure 2)</p> <p>Manuscript edited (Figure 3)</p> <p>Manuscript edited (Discussion)</p>

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