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Additional information
Design
Authors should set out clearly the objectives of the study and state whether the study was retrospective or prospective. Randomised trials must include the items included in the CONSORT statement (see 'Randomised Controlled Trials', above).

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Wherever possible a graphical presentation should be used to illustrate the main findings of a study. Base the graph on data points unless the sample sizes are very large. When plotting life tables always indicate the numbers of individuals at risk at the various times of follow-up. Avoid the use of 'error bars' showing 1 standard deviation or standard error.

The use of a mean and standard deviation (SD) to describe a distribution is only appropriate when the distribution is known to be normal. For non-parametric data, the median is a better measure of the centre of the distribution and the range or interquartile range (IQR), a better measure of spread. Avoid spurious precision; percentages should generally be given as integers.

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Strive to limit the number of statistical tests performed, especially on subgroups. If you cannot avoid multiple comparisons, then use an appropriate adjustment to avoid a 'type 1' (false-positive) error. Results of statistical tests should be reported by stating the value of the test statistic (t), the number of degrees of freedom (df) and the P value to two decimal places, e.g. t = 1.34, 16 df, P = 0.20.

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