

Reviewer 1: Robust and accurate debate regarding statin therapy for primary prevention is important, not simply for decision making at entities such as NICE, but also for the public and media who, in the end, are both the target and consumers of such information (and mis-information). There is legitimate reason for debate in this arena, but that debate cannot purposely be biased or based on factual errors. This letter to the Lancet from Armitage et al seeks to correct in the public record errors made by Thompson et al that are not insignificant (and suggest a somewhat surprising lack of sophistication about clinical trial data and its interpretation). I thus believe this letter should be published. My only concern is tone to ensure this debate remains collegial and thoughtful; as examples, the authors would lose little by saying "errors" rather than "extensive errors", "over-looked" rather than "entirely overlooked", etc.

Reviewer 2: Thank you for asking me to review this letter from Armitage and colleagues.

I have a lot of sympathy because I had similar thoughts when I saw the original letter from Thompson et al. However, it will be hard for the reader to follow the arguments without a copy of both letters in front of them.

The first point made by Armitage and colleagues (re errors in interpretation) is straightforward and sight of the original letter is not necessary to understand the argument. Indeed the case made by Thompson et al in the original letter is almost embarrassing in its naiveté.

The second point (misrepresentation of evidence) will probably be impossible to understand without a copy of the original letter alongside. However, the case made is correct, including use of sloppy language, inaccurate percentages and wholly invalid comparisons. Again, extraordinary in my opinion that such eminent people could have put their names to such clearly mistaken statements.

I certainly think it only fair that the record be put straight if possible, although it is a bit late in the day. This isn't about opinion - the corrections highlighted by Armitage and colleagues are exactly that - corrections of some very basic errors in data interpretation.