

Dr Goldacre's suggestion that we should share the 'analytic code' is bad science for the following reasons:

First, replication is key to the scientific activity. We asked a senior colleague review our two published papers[1,2] (our paper in the BMJ simply being an encore of the one in JRSM). He reported that our analyses were described in sufficient detail for others to replicate them. Indeed we are aware from our peer review activities that others have successfully replicated our methods in whole or in part for weekend analyses. At a professional level we expect to have correspondence with others working in the area and have indeed received and entered into such communication.

Second, the 'code' is a rather extensive catalogue of SQL and SAS programs which, when submitted, create the data sets and then run the analyses. These would cover many pages of information. Given that the code is partly machine dependent, it is unclear how it could be of use to a third party who may be conducting analysis in other environments such as Stata, R, Genstat, etc. The SAS manual describes thoroughly how to specify survival analyses with time dependencies and a suitably qualified and experienced statistician would not rely upon our code.[3] When we submitted the paper for publication we described it as a 'complex survivorship analysis' but the BMJ statistical referee correctly pointed out it is not really complex (the complexity coming from the application in the large data set and the degree of processing required).