Response to Jones and Milne

Following the publication of our two papers, we would like to provide a correction and point of clarification, following feedback from and discussion with colleagues. Neither of these alter the main conclusions of the papers.

We thank Professor Milne for drawing attention to an error in our first paper. During preparation of these complex papers, two figures were inadvertently switched. We regret that Figure 1 does not show age-standardised mortality rates (ASMR), but crude mortality, which is reflected in the accompanying text. The correct figure, using Office of National Statistics (ONS) data,¹ is shown below. However, this makes little practical difference to our inference. We used regression discontinuity analysis to identify the inflection point in the trends, which is the same, in 2011, with both. We then extrapolated forward the annual rates of decline between 1994 and 2011, comparing observed values in 2015 with predicted values. The relative increases are almost indistinguishable, at 11% and 12% for ASMR and crude mortality respectively.

Secondly, we should have clarified that the proportionate changes shown in Figure 2 use mid-year to mid-year data, the only source by single year of age available from ONS when we wrote the paper.² It does have the advantage over the calendar year data, in that all deaths were among individuals counted in the denominator. However, now that the calendar year data are available, it can be seen that while the absolute magnitude differs, both data sources show increases at each year of death.

Authors: Lucinda Hiam, Danny Dorling, Dominic Harrison, Martin McKee
Figure 1: Age-standardised mortality rate and crude mortality rates, all persons, England and Wales 1994-2015

References
