Author’s response to reviews

Title: Predictive values of upper gastrointestinal cancer alarm symptoms in the general population: a nationwide cohort study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editors at BMC Cancer,

Thank you for your review of our revised manuscript “Predictive values of upper gastrointestinal cancer alarm symptoms in the general population: a nationwide cohort study” and for giving us the chance to resubmit.

Below please find our point-by-point response to your comments:

1. Thank you for providing statements on ethics approval and consent to participate in this study. It is noted that you have stated in your Methods section that "Information on severe illness and subjects who had moved abroad was obtained through family or relatives”. Please clarify whether the people whose data was obtained
in this manner gave consent for family members to provide this information. Where consent was not obtainable (e.g. in the case of death or incapacity to give informed consent), please state this, and please also state whether the ethics committee that approved this study also approved this method of data collection and consent.

Response: Thank you for your comment. When a person was unable to answer the questionnaire due to severe illness or having moved abroad, family or relatives were able to decline the invitation on behalf of the invited person stating that illness or having moved abroad was the reason for the invited person not being able to answer the questionnaire or decline the invitation himself/herself. We did not obtain any information about the invited subject’s disease. To clarify how the information given by family or relatives was obtained we have now rephrased the sentence and added the following:

“When an invited subject was unable to respond due to severe illness or having moved abroad, family or relatives could decline the invitation on behalf of the invited person. The reason for not responding was then simply registered as illness or moved abroad.” (pp. 5-6, ll. 101-3)

In the Ethics section we have added the following:

“The Scientific Ethics Committee’s evaluation comprised all aspects of the project including the data collection.” (p. 18, ll. 315-6)

2. Thank you for providing a statement on authors' contributions. Please provide more justification for the contributions of JS, as currently they do not automatically qualify for authorship. Contribution to participation in study design, alone, does not usually justify authorship.

Response: Thank you for giving us the chance to clarify author contributions. JS made substantial contributions to conception and design of the study. Furthermore he contributed to the interpretation of data. In the process of writing the manuscript he revised it critically for
important intellectual content. Like all of the authors he gave final approval of the version to be 
published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work. Therefore, we believe that JS 
is qualified for authorship.

In the authors’ contributions section we have added the following:

“PFH, SR, JS and DEJ interpreted the data and PFH, SR and DEJ drafted the first version of the 
manuscript. All authors have revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content, 
approved the final manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.”

We hope that you find the abovementioned amendments sufficient for the manuscript to be 
published in BMC Cancer.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Haastrup