Author's response to reviews

Title: A survey of education and confidence level among graduating anesthesia residents with regard to selected peripheral nerve blocks

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Author's response to reviews: see over
The authors would like to thank the reviewer for his/her constructive comments. Please see our responses in red. We have revised the limitation section accordingly.

Reviewer’s comments

1. The study did not employ any sampling strategy and targeted the complete program of 2011. From a statistical point of view this is a naïve strategy since voluntary participation rates are known to be low.

Although on-line surveys generally have response rates lower than paper based surveys (often less than 50%). We agree with the reviewer that participation rate in our survey was low (Reference: Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, Vol. 33, No. 3, June 2008, 301–314).

2. The sampling strategy was firstly the inclusion of programs and then at the second stage the inclusion of graduates.

Anesthesia residents’ email addresses are usually not available to the public, therefore we contacted the programs first to reach a higher number of residents.

3. The study population was compiled by getting the consent from program directors. Only 14 gave consent. 1 declined and 106 did not respond. This consent stage therefore limit the study to 14 programs and a graduate total of 300 was estimated.

4. The 107 responses out of the total thus represents a response rate of 36%.

5. If one uses the information from Table 1 for the number of residents in class the median class size report is around 20 graduates. Thus 14x20 equals 280 graduates. From this perspective the response rate for this survey is less than 50%.

We agree with the reviewer’s comments on 3, 4, and 5. The sampling strategy, the impersonal nature of the survey, and a lack of an associated reward in return for the respondent’s time may have contributed to the low overall response rate. This was included in the limitations.

6. Generalisation of the survey results. The claim to a representative sample is made through the regional (nationwide) argument? the survey contains students from all regions. This is not a strong argument since the graduates are clustered in program and thus have limited representation across the region. The study had a low participation rate of programs (11%) and a very modest response rate within programs that consented. Thus the interpretation of results should be limited to the programs that participated and not to a national level. The survey did not achieve its aim to get a nationwide survey to obtain information on this education program.

We agree with the reviewer that the sampling strategy used in our survey may have resulted in clustering of subjects. Thus, our survey may have limited representation.
across the region.

7. Attempting a survey via this easy route often leads to results that are easy to interpret since you can only say something about the graduates that participated and nothing about the target population.

We have included this in the limitations (Please see our response for the comments 3,4 and 5).

8. Table 4. By changing the coding of the confidence response categories the correlations can be switched to positive numbers. This will facilitate the interpretation since one expects a positive correlation.

Table 4 has been updated by changing the coding of confidence level, now showing a positive correlation.

9. The study presents a descriptive analysis which is fine since the clustering within programs or non-response fractions have not been considered. It just describes the results of the graduates that participated in a simple way. The interpretation should also reflect this.

We have included this in the limitations.