Author's response to reviews

Title: Identical fracture patterns in combat vehicle blast injuries due to improvised explosive devices; a case series. Identical injury patterns in blast trauma

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

Hereby, we would like to present the revised manuscript of our report, entitled: ‘Identical fracture patterns in combat vehicle blast injuries due to improvised explosive devices’, for consideration of publication as an original report in the journal.

We would like to thank the reviewers on their valuable comments with which we feel the article could be greatly improved. We acknowledge that a lot of changes in the report had to be made. In response to the reviewer’s reports the manuscript was thoroughly revised. In addition to some changes in the manuscript that are self-explanatory, a point-by-point response to the reviewers remarks is given below.

To reviewer Arul Ramasamy:
Indeed we had to change the trauma mechanism form primary to tertiary. The described injuries are caused by tertiary blast injuries.
We agree with you that one would mostly expect lower limb fractures or fractures of the lumbar vertebrae after the described trauma mechanism. However, a paired 9th thoracic vertebra fracture and isolated fractures of the calcaneus and the talus were found. Therefore, these unusual injury types are exactly what in our opinion justifies the recommendation to attend special attention to bodily areas that are injured in the co-driver.
Furthermore, the description of the trauma mechanism of radial neck fractures was described in further detail in accordance to your request.
In some cases we could verify the follow-up of the patients, nevertheless, because of their rapid transportation to the US or Germany we could not verify what kind of surgery all soldiers underwent. However interesting this information would be, we felt that it would not further underline our intended message with regard to trauma work-up and the detection of occult lesions.

To reviewer Brian Stemper:
We removed the IED figure, indeed it is not necessary to publish. We added information on the characteristics of the vehicle and on other factors that could have influenced the injury severity. Indeed we had to change the trauma mechanism from primary to tertiary. The classification of the fractures and injury severity scales were added to the report. Furthermore, each case is discussed more elaborately, accompanied by key references. Moreover, a new literature search was performed and
additional reports valuable in supporting our message or putting it into context were incorporated in the manuscript. Lastly, unnecessary paragraphs and presented cases have been removed.

General comments:
All patients were American soldiers and transported to the US or Germany within 48 hours after trauma. Unfortunately, it was not possible to receive their patient consent. However, all other personal details that could lead back to the patient were blinded (name, age, patient identification numbers).

The manuscript, as submitted or its essence in another version, is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and will not be published elsewhere while under consideration by BMC musculoskeletal disorders. The authors have no commercial associations or sources of support that might pose a conflict of interest. All authors have made substantive contributions to the study, and all authors endorse the data and conclusions.

In anticipation of your response, on behalf of the co-authors,

With kind regards,

Joris Commandeur
Robert Jan Derksen
Damian MacDonald
Roelf Breederveld