Author's response to reviews

Title: All purulence is local - Epidemiology and management of skin and soft tissue infections in three urban emergency departments

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To the reviewers and editors:

We are pleased that you were able to provide excellent constructive feedback regarding our manuscript titled “All purulence is local – Epidemiology and management of skin and soft tissue infections in three urban emergency departments.” The authors have incorporated the reviewer’s recommendations in the revised manuscript, which you will find attached. Specific responses to each of the reviewer’s proposed revisions may be found on the following page.

Please feel free to contact Dr. Chris Merritt, the corresponding author, with further communications at your earliest convenience.

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Specific responses to reviewer’s comments:

**Major compulsory revisions:**

1. **Table 4C.** I cannot understand the meaning of the percentages given in these tables despite spending some time looking them over. The Table requires more explanation. Are parts A, B, and C showing mutually exclusive categories?

   - Parts A, B, and C are indeed mutually exclusive categories, defined by the category of empiric antibiotic therapy prescribed during the ED stay. The table legend and title have been expanded to attempt to better explain the data shown. Percentages are for each row, with adult and pediatric data considered separately such that the percentages should total 100% for each age category.

2. **Table 5.** When there are variables with mutually exclusive categories (such as insurance type, race, or gender) and a single test is performed and one category is the referent, it is helpful to denote this in the Table with the word "ref." or "referent" in the place of the OR for that category (e.g., I am assuming that the referent categories were "Private", "white" and "male" for the 3 variables noted above).

   - This has been adjusted as recommended.

**Minor Essential Revisions:**

1. In section 2.5 at the end of the penultimate sentence there is no period.

   - This has been corrected.

2. In the seventh paragraph of the Discussion, there is the following sentence: "Given that most isolates even from adults ... and that I & D alone is sufficient therapy for most abscess ..." I would advocate that this be changed to state: "... that I & D alone is sufficient therapy for most uncomplicated abscesses ..."

   - This has been adjusted as recommended.

3. In the eighth paragraph, there is the following sentence: "The clinician can opt not to treat purulent infections with antibiotics if adequate I & D is performed." I would advocate that this be changed to "...can opt not to treat uncomplicated, small purulent infections ..." to be consistent with the IDSA MRSA treatment guidelines and good practices.

   - This has been adjusted as recommended.