Author's response to reviews

Title: Validation of Ottawa Ankle Rules in Iran: A prospective survey

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Author's response to reviews: see over
The authors consider their duty to express their sincere thanks to Dr. GM Kerkhoffs for his efforts in editing our manuscript and for his invaluable comments. Here is the report of our actions and responses to his comments.

**General**

1. The manuscript needs rewriting by a native English speaker.
   *Answer:* Done. The manuscript is reviewed and rewritten by a native English speaker.

**Background**

2. The section is too bulky and should definitely be shortened.
   *Answer:* We have omitted the full details of Steill et al project on OARs and provided a brief description of the project. The section has thus been shortened considerably.

3. I would like to have some more information on why/how the medical situation in Iran differs from the other countries.
   *Answer:* We have added a sentence to the last paragraph of this section, providing the more information on the current medical practice situation in Iran.

**Methods**

4. 237 patients [were included], however in results section 200 are analyzed, where did the 37 go? Add a flowchart of the patient flow and a list of excluded patients.
   *Answer:* These 37 patients have been excluded due to our exclusion criteria, which are clearly separated in the flowchart we have enclosed. The fact that the number of our excluded patients is the same as those who have undergone a surgical operation is just a simple coincident.

5. The exclusion criterion that describes exclusion when the injury is longer than 7 days before admission to the hospital should be changed into 48 hours; probably this will even better the results of the specificity.
   *Answer:* When we excluded these cases –which were only 9 cases- the specificity was reduced! The reason is that when we limit the criterion to 48 hours, the ratio of false positive cases –those who do not a fracture, but present with severe pain and tenderness–to all patients will be increased, thus decreasing the specificity. Therefore we did not include the new recommended criterion in the manuscript.
   The results when the criterion is changed to 48 hours are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of patients: 191</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Fractures: 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAR+ : 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAR- : 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity: 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity: 39.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   We should add that Steill et al used the criterion of 10 days, while we reduced it to 7 days.

**Results:**

6. 37 patients are missing.
   *Answer:* These are the excluded patients which are separately stated in the flowchart.
7. More than 50% of the patients reached the hospital within 7 hours, please give exact percentages and add in table.
Answer: The exact percentages are provided in Table 1.

Answer: We have added a table to the Results section and a paragraph to the Discussion section, comparing the methods of treatment for fractures and ligamentous injuries and stating the relevance of our results to the editor’s eminent work on the subject.

**Discussion:**
9. Add some spice by telling some more on the situation in Iranian medicine. The section on the costs is interesting but comes from nowhere.

Answer: The prices are the exact tariffs confirmed by the Iranian Ministry of Health for public health services; however, the number of patients presenting to the hospital is a rough estimate. Sentences are added to the section to state these two facts. Moreover, we added a sentence to provide a better picture of the financial restrictions in Iran.

**Note:** The authors changed some sentences as described below:

1. There was a typing error in the original manuscript. The percentage of female patients was stated to be 45.50%, while the correct number is 47.50%. This mistake has been corrected.
2. A sentence was added to the Method section, stating that the orthopedics resident who has interpreted the radiographs "had not visited or examined the patients".
3. The sentence describing the definition of ankle region in the Method section was omitted.