Author's response to reviews

Title: Response rates to a mailed survey of a representative sample of cancer patients randomly drawn from the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry: incentive and length effects.

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
06/21/10

Melissa Norton, M.D.  
BMC Medical Research Methodology  
c/o BioMed Central Ltd, Floor 6  
236 Gray's Inn Road  
London, WC1X 8HL, United Kingdom.

Dear Dr. Norton,

Attached is a revised version of the manuscript, entitled: *Response rates to a mailed survey of representative cancer patients: incentive and length effects.*

The remaining reviewer comments have been addressed. We also added a more detailed response to the questions concerning conflict of interest.

The content of this manuscript has not been copyrighted or published previously and is not now under consideration for publication elsewhere. The contents will not be copyrighted, submitted, or published elsewhere while acceptance by this journal is under consideration.

We appreciate your consideration of these revisions (Specific comments to reviewers can be found below).

Thank you,

Bridget Kelly, PhD, MPH  
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Responses to reviewer comments

Reviewer comment:
Country - Please remember to include the country in the affiliation details.
Response: USA has been added.

Reviewer comment:
Keywords Please delete the Keywords.
Response: Keywords have been deleted.

Reviewer comment:
Funding Please remove this information from the time page and place it under the Acknowledgements.
Response: This information has been removed and placed under acknowledgments.

Reviewer comment:
Abstract: Please tone down the conclusions under the abstract, we suggest the following alternative sentence “Mailed surveys may provide a suitable alternative option for survey-based research with cancer patients.”
Response: The suggested revisions has been made.

Reviewer comment:
Page 3: “Internet surveys may also miss those of lower socio-economic status.” Can you provide a reference for this statement?
Response: A reference as been added (see page 3).

Reviewer comment:
Page 3 “We found no published examples of web surveys of representative samples of recently diagnosed cancer patients.” This sentence seems slightly out of place, can it be removed?
Response: The sentence has been removed.

Reviewer comment:
Page 3 – “As a result, some recent research shows that response rates for mailed surveys can be much higher than those administered by phone or Internet [6, 13, 14].” The references provided are over six years old, can you provide a more recent reference or revise the sentence to remove the reference to “recent” research.
Response: The sentence has been revised.

Reviewer comment:
Footnotes: Please note that we cannot accommodate footnotes, can you please incorporate the text from the footnotes into the main text.
Response: The footnote has been incorporated into the text.

Reviewer comment:
Page 16, last paragraph before Conclusions: This paragraph outlines results from another study not described previously, please delete this paragraph.
Response: The paragraph has been deleted.

Reviewer comment:
CONSORT Checklist- Thank you for including the completed CONSORT checklist, can we ask you to remove the footnote related to the CONSORT statement from the bottom of the table.
Response: This footnote has been removed.

Reviewer comment:
Competing interests: We note that Dr Kelly is affiliated at Research Triangle Institute, an institution that provides research services to clients, including survey research. We feel that this can be considered as a competing interest, and thus, we would like you to please consider the journal’s questions in relation to Competing interests and revise the declaration as appropriate:

We have answered each of these specific questions below, but believe that given their responses, the declaration is accurate as it is. However, if the editors have specific suggestions about how the statement at the end of the paper should read, we welcome those suggestions.

Financial competing interests
In the past five years have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future? Is such an organization financing this manuscript (including the article-processing charge)? If so, please specify.

No. The paper was written while Dr. Kelly worked as a research fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. Since joining RTI she has worked only on revisions to this manuscript and that work has been done on her own time. She has not been compensated for that work. Neither the University of Pennsylvania nor RTI International benefits any more from this work being published than any other academic institution at which authors of journal articles work. The article-processing charge is being paid by the University of Pennsylvania.

Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organization that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future? If so, please specify.
No.

Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript? Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript? If so, please specify.

No.

Do you have any other financial competing interests? If so, please specify.
Non-financial competing interests
Are there any non-financial competing interests (political, personal, religious, ideological, academic, intellectual, commercial or any other) to declare in relation to this manuscript? If so, please specify.

No.