Author's response to reviews

Title: Comparison of participants and non-participants to the ORISCAV-LUX population-based study on cardiovascular risk factors in Luxembourg

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Version: 5 Date: 25 August 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Diana Marshal

Dear Editors,

Reference: **MS: 1492936804367602**

We thank you for revising our manuscript and giving us the opportunity to re-submit a revised version.

We provide a point-to-point response to all issues, raised by the two referees, and coloured the new changes in red. We hope that the revised version is now suitable for publication in your Journal.

Yours sincerely,

Ala’a ALKERWI
Point-by-Point Response

Reviewer's report

Version: 3 Date: 23 August 2010
Reviewer: Pascal Bovet

Discretionary revisions

The new version submitted by the authors adequately addresses issues that were raised earlier. May i still suggest the following (discretionary):

Issue 4) I think that the information of the marginal gain in participants gathered by the first and second reminders should (also) appear in the results section. Ideally, it could be provided as a table, as this is simple information provides concrete very important information to other investigators. I would let this decision up to the authors/editor.

OK. Table 1, providing the impact of response-enhancement measures on participation rate, has been added to “Results” section, as suggested by the reviewer.

Issue 5) May I just reiterate my suggestion that figures on cost of the survey (which was very well presented by the authors in their response) becomes part of the paper. Although obviously not necessarily a perfect account of all possible costs of such a survey, the figure provided by the authors (~1 million $ for a survey) to the intent of the reviewer provides a critically important information to whoever want to do surveys. Again, as I mentioned in my previous review, many people (professionals, policy makers, etc) largely underestimate this aspect of surveys. Since the authors intended to provide some “take home message” for investigators in terms of how to improve outcomes of surveys, I think this information would be really well suited to appear in the paper (not necessarily in the abstract, but somewhere in the text) and be shortly discussed, for food for thought for whoever contemplates performing population surveys. But I would let this decision to integrate this information in the paper to the authors and editor.

O.K. this information has been added to the text “Discussion, Strengths and limitations” section. The authors hope sincerely that this version satisfies the editors, since the reviewer let the final decision up to them.

Issue 7) My previous point was not a critique of the survey but only a thought on the (likely bleak) future of population based surveys. The fact that a particular routine database lacks some info (e.g. SES in IGSS) is of secondary importance because
not all information is necessary for all surveillance analyses, and, furthermore, such information (e.g. SES) could possibly be obtained/linked from another database, e.g. database on social security or population censuses, etc (in an ideal setting in an ideal country in the future). Again, the point here is that the future of “one shot” population based surveys is not very rosy and it might need to be found in such routine ongoing and funded population-based surveillance tools that can provide data on a routine basis (making use of all kind of possible routinely conducted databases targeting large groups of population and handled by government, schools, assurances, retail business, etc).

Obviously this also comes with some problems (technical, ethics, etc) but these may be solved and this might be the way forward when considering low participation rates in “one shot surveys” (in all countries). I would suggest modifying the following sentence, but, again I would let final decision this up to authors/editor:

For the future of costly population-based surveys, the database would be a good alternative option for health monitoring

Into (something like):

In view of high cost and low and possibly ever decreasing participation rates in population surveys, data collected from ongoing routine databases may represent a good alternative option for health monitoring in the future.

O.K, the sentence was replaced by that suggested by the reviewer. The authors hope deeply that this modification satisfies the editors, since the reviewer let the final decision up to them.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests
Reviewer's report

Version: 3 Date: 10 August 2010

Reviewer: Dag Steinar Thelle

The above paper has been revised and I have no further comments. The issue as such - non-response or selection bias - should lead to a further discussion in your journal. I recommend the paper to be published.

The authors thank the reviewer for his revision and his recommendation to publish the article. They do agree with him that the subject of the article is of interest for the readers of the BMC Medical Research Methodology Journal.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests: I have no competing interests,