Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors affecting Study Efficiency and Item Non-response in Health Surveys in Developing Countries: The Jamaica National Healthy Lifestyle Survey

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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The Editor
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Dear Sir

Re: MS: 4257386711105511
Factors affecting Study Efficiency and Item Non-response in Health Surveys in Developing Countries:
The Jamaica National Healthy Lifestyle Survey

Thank you for this second opportunity to revise the captioned manuscript. We have taken account of the reviewers’ comments and have responded to all of them in point form below and in the revised manuscript.

We hope that the revision meets your approval and that the manuscript is of a standard to be published in the Journal.

Yours sincerely

Rainford Wilks
Principal Investigator.
Response to Reviewers

MS: 4257386711105511

Factors affecting Study Efficiency and Item Non-response in Health Surveys in Developing Countries:
The Jamaica National Healthy Lifestyle Survey

Reviewer # 1

General

1. In response to query about inter-rater reliability, two procedures were carried out to assess the reliabilities in the study:
   a. Prior to the main study a test-retest reliability of the questionnaire was done on 20 persons who were not participants in the study. From this exercise the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed for each question.
   b. During training and certification interviewers were tested against trainers until acceptable reliability was achieved.

We have inserted a statement to this effect in the Methods section under the Questionnaire Reliability, Training, and Certification sub-section and corrected the statement in the results.

Reviewer # 2

Major Compulsory Revisions

(Page numbers cited below refer to the previous version)

1. In response to a request to shorten the manuscript, we have removed several paragraphs and sections (e.g. page 4-5 – sections from paragraph 1 & 3; page 5 – section from paragraph 1; page 22 – paragraph 2; page 27 – paragraph 1 and section of paragraph 2) but are careful not exclude important information for researchers with similar interest especially in the developing world where there is a dearth of similar reports.

2. We agree that phrases like “reluctance to respond”, “systematic refusal” and “quite willing to provide responses” could impute motive in non-response and we have carefully removed such phrases (e.g. pages 15, 17, 21).

3. We did report (page 17, paragraph 2) that 67.1% and 3.1% of non-responders to questions on household income and number of sexual partners respectively gave “don’t know” for an answer. We have further provided the age specific estimates for these proportions in respect of income in the same paragraph.

4. We agree that ignorance of household income is likely to be a major contributor to non-response to this question. However we note that “don’t know” was high in all age groups (lowest 58% in the 45-54 year olds)
although it was highest in the young and the elderly. This pattern is similar to the total non-response including “don’t know” and other categories. If ignorance of household income is an explanation, it is not confined to youngsters. Reluctance to provide the information cannot be excluded.

5. We agree that 3 minutes per person would appear to be small and unimportant. However in large surveys with thousands of respondents it could be a source of extra costs and if it could be improved, could yield savings. Education was not significantly associated with interview time and thus its apparent superiority to age in the multivariate model should be interpreted with caution and necessitates the reporting of the Univariate associations. We agree that the urban-rural differences should not be overstated and have revised the section to reflect this.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In response to query about inter-rater reliability, two procedures were carried out to assess the reliabilities in the study:
   a. Prior to the main study a test-retest reliability of the questionnaire was done on 20 persons who were not participants in the study. From this exercise the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed for each question.
   b. During training and certification interviewers were tested against trainers until acceptable reliability was achieved.

We have inserted a statement to this effect in the Methods section under the Questionnaire Reliability, Training, and Certification sub-section and corrected the statement in the results.

Reviewer # 3

1. We have carefully reviewed the manuscript and trust that all errors have been removed.