Author's response to reviews

Title: A Pilot Survey of Post-Deployment Health Care Needs in Small Community-Based Primary Care Clinics

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Author's response to reviews:

June 17, 2011

Margaret Maxwell, Editor
BioMed Central – BMC Family Medicine
Re: resubmission of manuscript #6908626365026469

Dear Dr. Maxwell:

Thank you for the opportunity to resubmit our manuscript: A Pilot Survey of Post-Deployment Health Care Needs in Small Community-Based Primary Care Clinics. We thank the editorial staff and the reviewer for their comments. In addition to formatting edits per journal preferences, this revision focuses on providing additional methodological details, updating the abstract, and citing other useful and relevant articles.

We have addressed each of the specific comments and concerns, as indicated below:

1. Please restructure the abstract to include the context or aim of the study.

We have restructured the abstract as requested.

2. Please include a statement on ethics in the Methods section of the manuscript.

The language on page 5 has been revised to more clearly state compliance with the Helsinki Declaration and review and approval by an independent ethics committee.

Reviewer 1:

COMMENTS TO THE AUTHORS: The area is very topical and valuable. LEVEL OF INTEREST: An article of importance in its field
We appreciate the reviewer's assessment that the manuscript is topical and represents an important contribution to the literature.

General comments:
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? The question is a little vague- ‘health care needs’ could be very broad. Unfortunately as Table 1 is missing and the 2 health related items of the questionnaire are not described we only know the results in vague terms.

We apologize for the missing table, which has been included in the resubmission.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? The 9 item survey should be better described but that may be within the missing Table?

We have provided more details regarding the survey in the methods on Page 5.

3. Are the data sound? Difficult to tell with no comparison publication data presented (perhaps there is none?) but also no checking via other means (such as a small sample of notes checked by hand). The missing Table 1 again makes it difficult as the majority of data must be in that Table?

We found few or no comparative studies focusing on post-deployment needs in primary care clinics (see comment to #9 below and revised language on Page 11). We are not entirely sure if the reviewer’s other comments refer to data quality. We were not able to conduct chart reviews (previously noted as a limitation on Page 11), which were beyond the scope of this pilot project. We have clarified in the methods (Page 5) that surveys were scanned directly into the analytic database, reviewed/cleaned by trained analysts for quality purposes, and analyzed per Methods description.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? The Abstract should include more detail. The number of physicians included, the setting, numerical results and better description of health needs (what are the psychosocial disruptions?)

The abstract has been revised to include the number of providers, setting, description of health care needs, and definition of psychosocial disruption as requested.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Reasonable discussion but difficult to judge with little data reported

In context of the additional Methods information, we have reviewed/revised the Discussion section to ensure this summary accurately reflects our primary findings, key implications, and potential next research directions.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Not explicitly

We believe that the limitations of this small pilot, as reported in the original submission, are clearly and explicitly stated on Page 10-11.
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? The authors do not refer to their previous work it would be interesting to know why? [Mil Med. 2010 Dec;175(12):953-7. Postdeployment health care for returning OEF/OIF military personnel and their social networks: a qualitative approach. Finley EP, Zeber JE, Pugh MJ, Cantu G, Copeland LA, Parchman ML, Noel PH]. But also do not seem to be putting it into an International context? [R Army Med Corps. 2010 Sep;156(3):196-9. Detecting post-deployment mental health problems in primary care. Coetzee RH, Simpson RG, Greenberg N]. Indeed, the article describes the issue within the context of the US health system which is valuable but perhaps less so for an International journal?

We appreciate the opportunity to update the manuscript to include references such as these which were only recently released around the time we submitted the original manuscript. These are now cited on Page 11.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? No- see above

As noted above, we have added clarifications to the abstract as requested.

Again, thank you so much for allowing us to resubmit our work. We look forward to your decision.

Sincerely yours,

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