Author's response to reviews

Title: The Effect of Illustrations on Patient Comprehension of Medication Instruction Labels

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editors:

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We have responded to all of the reviewers' comments as noted below.

Reviewer 1 (Vimla Patel)
1. COMMENT: "I was disappointed to see that such an interesting and important study was atheoretical....The papers cited are limited to only the practically-oriented studies...." RESPONSE: We have revised the Background section to provide more of a theoretical framework from the educational literature (Background, 2nd paragraph). Appropriate references have been added, as kindly identified by the reviewer. As suggested, we have searched the journal "Instructional Science" for the last 7 years for additional articles relevant to our paper, but have found none.
2. COMMENT: "Not having a sound theory to help the authors generate good hypotheses also meant that they were too narrow in their interpretation of results and this could be misleading people to believe that pictures are not necessary." RESPONSE: We have revised the Conclusion section (1st paragraph) to broaden our interpretation of our results and place them in better context, taking into account the theoretical frameworks mentioned above.
3. COMMENT: "It is also unfortunate that more time was spent on careful analysis of quantitative data rather than looking at the meaning of the data collected." RESPONSE: We did not collect our data in a way that would allow for more thorough qualitative analysis (see also our response to Reviewer 2, Comment 2 below). This limitation is acknowledged in the Discussion section, and the potential for future research exploring this direction is mentioned in the last paragraph of the Conclusion section.

Reviewer 2 (J.F. Arocha)
1. COMMENT: "The issue has been investigated in the past, with basically the same inconsistent results...." RESPONSE: We have revised the Conclusion section to incorporate a discussion of the points raised regarding the inconsistency of previous studies on the effect of illustrations as an aid to comprehension. The manuscript now mentions the reviewer's point that the quality of illustrations probably has a large effect on their effectiveness. (Conclusion, 1st paragraph)
2. COMMENT: "I think that they missed an opportunity to get at some answers as to why the inconsistency on the research results by interviewing the study participants in detail...." RESPONSE: We did not conduct detailed interviews that would allow us to further analyze the cognitive processes that might explain the results that we observed. This limitation has been acknowledged (Discussion section, 3rd paragraph). The potential for future research exploring this direction is mentioned in the last paragraph of the Conclusion section.
3. COMMENT: "The authors mentioned their method of data coding .. but fail to say what an informational component is...." RESPONSE: Additional detail has been provided to clarify how the informational components of each label was defined and how responses were coded as incorrect, partially correct, or completely correct (Method section, "Data Coding" subsection).
4. COMMENT: "It is customary to report the number of study participants in the methods section, not in the results section." RESPONSE: The number of participants is now reported in the Methods section ("Setting and Subjects" subsection).
5. COMMENT: "Where they patients' responses tape-recorded? How were they registered?" RESPONSE: The method of recording participants' responses is now specified (Methods section, "Data Collection" subsection, 2nd paragraph). Responses were written down verbatim; interviews were not audiotaped.

We hope that these revisions meet with your approval.
Thank you.

Stephen Hwang and Carolyn Tram