Author's response to reviews

Title: Why do patients want to have their blood tested? A qualitative study of patient expectations in general practice

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to further improve our manuscript titled: ‘Why do patients want to have their blood tested? A qualitative study of patient expectations Title: in general Practice’. We were happy to see that two referees were happy with the previous improvements and applied the suggestions of the third referee, as clarified below. Hopefully you are prepared to publish the paper now.

Warm regards, on behalf of all co-authors,

Loes van Bokhoven

Referees’ comments

Referee 1:
No comments, accept without revision.

Referee 2:
No comments.

Referee 3:
- It would be more persuasive were the data – quotes from patients – to be somewhat expanded and then integrated into the text or presented, annotated, in a separate table. Leaving the quotes to the end of each section seemed to me not to do most justice to them. We added some extra quotes and integrated all quotes in the text.
- There is scope for developing the findings a little more. Tests emerge from this paper as providing certainty, and therefore being valued more where the relationship with the GP is such that the GP cannot alone provide a sense of certainty. We added a remark reflecting this interpretation of the results section in the first paragraph of the discussion section.
- In patient 10501 (p11) there is also the sense that tests provide a way of ‘doing something’, although the authors do not pursue this. I wondered whether they had any other data that might illuminate this function of the tests. We agree with the reviewer that this patient may have meant this function of testing but we think the quotation might also be read as if the patient has a clear goal namely being tested in order to be reassured by a normal test result. We searched the data to find more support and found a few other similarly non conclusive quotations. From research among GPs it is known that they order tests to prevent an ‘empty hands feeling’. We decided to add some remarks about this item in the discussion section.
- I did not recognise or understand the ‘crystal ball’ in the reference to Salmon [20] (p14) and I think that this whole sentence would be better removed unless it can be clarified. We removed the sentence.
• *A minor point about language: that a wait and see policy was ‘not always’ favoured leaves is unnecessarily ambiguous – I think the authors are saying that it was rarely favoured.*

Though probably not their first choice, as all the patients in the study expected blood tests to be ordered, a group of patients stated they were prepared to watchfully wait. Therefore we change the expression ‘not always’ in ‘not often’ but prefer not to use ‘rarely favoured’ as this may be too strong.